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WILL STALIN EXPLAIN?

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The Week-end Review

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THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION—The Week-end Review. *Incorporating The New Statesman, The Nation and Athenaeum, Week-end Review.*

DIPLOMATICALLY, and from a military point of view, the struggle for Spain hangs fire. Madrid still holds out; the rebel advance on Malaga from Ronda and Marbella has been checked; and we have yet to see whether the long-delayed German and Italian replies to the British Note on "volunteers" bring non-intervention nearer practical realisation. Both the Fascist Powers profess their desire to see immediate measures taken by all concerned to stop the influx of volunteers into Spain. Their willingness to take action in this sense is made conditional on the imposition of effective international frontier control in Spain. This falls within the province of the Non-Intervention Committee, and there is ample scope for delays and obstruction (by Portugal, for example) before an agreed scheme can be put into operation. Though she does not make it a condition of her adhesion to a control plan, Germany still "attaches special value" to the recall of all volunteers now in Spain. Withdrawal of the "totalitarian" contingents supplied by Germany and Italy will present no difficulties; but Hitler is obviously aware of the fact that the International Brigade includes not merely individual British and French citizens, who might or might not respond to their Governments' appeal to them to withdraw, but large numbers of German and Italian *émigrés* who have no citizen's rights at home and owe no citizen's allegiance to the Governments whose passports they carry. For them there can be no question of "recall."

"Solutions" by the League

The League Council can scarcely be congratulated on its week's work. It is true that in the Franco-Turkish dispute over Alexandretta a compromise acceptable to both parties has been evolved. The Sanjak is to enjoy internal autonomy; Syria is to be responsible for its external relations, but may not conclude any international agreement affecting the Sanjak without the League's consent; and a League delegate of French nationality is to exercise supervision on the spot. The solution is ingenious and, given goodwill all round, may work. But its principles recall significantly those established by the League in the case of Danzig and now cynically abandoned. The Danzig problem, indeed, has also been "liquidated," by handing the city over, unconditionally, to the Nazis. The statute is torn up; the League's guarantee goes by the board. The new High Commissioner will be an impotent observer, tolerated only on condition that he does not interfere. In defending this betrayal Mr. Eden disingenuously expressed confidence that political tension in the Free City would thus be lessened. No doubt. As he spoke, thirty "Communists" (which, in context, simply means anti-Nazis) were being sentenced by a

summary court in Danzig to varying terms of penal servitude. It is a sorry pass when the Foreign Secretary of a democratic country defends political *Gleichgeschaltung* as a remedy for "tension."

M. Blum's Appeal

The comparatively favourable reception given by the German press to the French Premier's speech at Lyons inspires hopes, but not confidence, that in the matter of European co-operation Hitler may be willing to talk business. Addressing a banquet which formed an impressive demonstration of the solidarity of the Front Populaire, M. Blum disclaimed any idea of injuring German dignity by the offer of a bargain—economic assistance in return for limitation of armaments. Any agreements must be on a footing of perfect equality. At the same time there was absolute interdependence between economic and political co-operation. No nation could be expected to help another so long as fear existed that advantages gained from such aid might be diverted to the purposes of war. There are indications that some, at least, of Hitler's advisers consider M. Blum's clear hints that France is ready to support colonial and other economic concessions to Germany well worth accepting as a basis for negotiations. Even on opportunist grounds an economic *rapprochement* with France would assist at this juncture the Four Year self-sufficiency plan. The difficulty, however, remains that Germany seems unlikely to think in terms of anything but a bilateral accord with France; she will have nothing to do with any Eastern Pact covering Russia or even Czechoslovakia. M. Blum, on the other hand, made it clear that, for France, peace and security in Europe are "indivisible," and that the settlement of Franco-German problems must form part of a "general settlement." So long as Germany insists on acting as protagonist of an anti-Russian, anti-Communist and, according to Herr von Ribbentrop, anti-Liberal and anti-democratic, crusade to which her deliberately self-isolated war economy is being subordinated, there is no obvious way out of the impasse.

Crisis in Japan

Although the Army is in the forefront in the news, the crisis in Japan was precipitated by the civilian political elements in consequence of the Japanese-German pact. Not that the pact in itself was opposed, although doubt was expressed whether it furthers Japanese interests; but it was announced just as Moscow was on the verge of signing a new fishing agreement with Tokyo. In consequence, Moscow refused to sign, and many of the civilian politicians, backed by a large section of the press, charged the Hirota Government with "stupidity" for not having waited until the fishing agreement was "in the bag." Moscow finally consented to a continuation for a year of the present fishing agreement, but it will now be difficult to achieve a long-term settlement of an issue that means much in a land where fish is next to rice as a staple article of diet. The fundamental causes of the crisis, however, go much farther back than Japanese-German-Soviet relations. During the past year, Japan's conquest of China has hung fire, and the Army—not without reason—complains that this is due to British "interference." Since Sir Frederick Leith-Ross went to the Far East in 1935, there have been increasingly close relations between Nanking and London. The Chinese dollar was pegged to the British pound; the Canton-Hankow Railway was completed with British funds; Hainan Island, south of Hong Kong, is to be developed with British capital which will also be used to build a railway from Nanking into Kiangsi; and there are reports of other large British credits to China. All this has encouraged increasing Chinese resistance to Japan's demands.

Costly Imperialism

After the February 26th revolt last year, the Hirota Cabinet was appointed by the army, in the sense that every Minister had to have the approval of the General Staff before taking office. Thus the army had power without responsibility. Whether they will now get both remains to be seen. In any event, there are two salient features in the situation. First, the Japanese bourgeoisie do not differ from the army on imperial objectives, but army tactics recently have failed to secure those objectives in China, while in Manchukuo development has been under army instead of business auspices. In bourgeois eyes, Japanese Imperialism is failing to pay dividends. Instead, taxes are mounting and trade is declining. The present budget calls for Yen 3,038 millions, or Yen 735 million more than a year ago, and Japan's adverse balance of foreign trade rose last year to Yen 150 million, as compared with only Yen 14 million in 1934. Secondly, army politics cannot properly be described as "Fascist." Rather they are feudal. After the February 26th revolt, it was revealed that only one business man had financially supported it; and he had been blackmailed into doing so. Nor are the bourgeoisie supporting the army now; quite the contrary. In Japan to-day there is no contest between Fascism and Liberalism. It is a struggle between what Pareto called the "lions" and the "foxes."

Flood, Strike and Trade

The floods and the automobile strike have conspired to wash out the public attention which Mr. Runciman's trade negotiations in the United States would otherwise have received from American public opinion. Both Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Runciman have denied that anything at all has been said on the subject of the British debt, and it is hardly likely that Mr. Runciman is dealing, except incidentally, with monetary stabilisation. The question at issue is rather whether anything can be done towards a lowering of tariffs, and the institution of some sort of international move towards less restricted trade conditions. Meanwhile General Motors, who are refusing to negotiate until the strikers leave or are driven out of the occupied factories, have fallen foul of both Miss Perkins and President Roosevelt, on account of Mr. Sloan's refusal to come to Washington at Miss Perkins' request. It is something new in American politics to have the Administration openly rebuking a spokesman of big business for assuming that he has a right to tread on his employees when and how he likes. It is not yet certain however that, even with Mr. Roosevelt benevolent, Mr. Lewis will be strong enough to force a spectacular win. But Mr. Lewis is already announcing his intention of tackling Mr. Ford as soon as it has been won. As for the floods, there are now said to be nearly three-quarters of a million people homeless, and worse to come. Typhoid, due to

contaminated water, has already appeared, and relief agencies are being strained to the utmost of their resources.

Espionage and Justice

The dockyard affair cannot be allowed to end where it was left by the House of Commons on Tuesday. We now know that Sir Samuel Hoare and the Cabinet dismissed the five men concerned on the evidence of spies, and that the reason for refusing to let the men know the charges made against them or to bring them to any sort of trial is that the Government does not want the identity of its spies to be known. This attitude, as Mr. Greenwood told the House of Commons, involves an intolerable violation of the principles of natural justice. He might have added that it involves a revival of the system of espionage practised during and after the Napoleonic Wars, and given up amid nearly universal execration about the time of the Reform Act of 1832. Castles, Oliver and Edwards, or their modern equivalents, are now apparently free to resume operations in our midst. But we are worse off than our forbears; Pitt's successors were compelled to produce their vile tools in court, whereas Mr. Baldwin, it seems, need not. Most sinister of all is the charge, to which no reply seems to have been made in the debate, that the Government has not merely discharged these men without trial, but also caused them to be blacklisted by the Engineering Employers' Federation—or at any rate connived at this. A tame Conservative majority gave the Government an ample margin for defeating the Labour motion on Tuesday; but we can hardly believe that any decent man voted on the Government side without a feeling of shame. Or have we come to this already—that spies and provocative agents are to be believed without cross-examination, and that men accused of being "subversive" are outside the claims of justice?

A Sensible Report

The Labour Party's Commission on the distressed areas has issued its first interim Report—a thoroughly workmanlike document. It is proposed that the Special Areas should be placed directly under the charge of a Cabinet Minister appointed for the purpose, with the existing Commissioners for England and Wales and for Scotland as his executive agents. The absurd condition which prohibits the Commissioners from making grants in aid of any project eligible for aid from another department, whether such a grant is actually being made or not, should be abolished, and the Minister in charge should be given a large grant to spend, with immunity in spending it from detailed Treasury control. Local rates in the Special Areas should be brought down, by means of a Treasury grant, to the average rates over the country as a whole, and the Minister should be empowered to enlarge or narrow the boundaries of the Special Areas in accordance with changing conditions. There should be State control over the location of new factories; and munition works especially should be set up wherever possible in the distressed areas. There is much more than this in the Report, and most of it is straight common sense. So is an accompanying memorandum from the South Wales Miners' Federation dealing with the needs of South Wales. That public pressure can do something to modify the Government's attitude has been shown this week by the abandonment of the proposal to put up a new aircraft factory near Maidenhead, and the decision to transfer it to one of the distressed areas. But this incident also shows how necessary public pressure is; until the full weight of public opinion made itself felt, the Air Ministry was loudly maintaining that nowhere except Maidenhead would serve its purpose at all, and that a site in one of the distressed areas was wholly out of the question.

Co-operators and Politics

In the Chancery Division this week, Mr. Justice Luxmoore upheld the claim of the London Co-operative Society to be allowed to spend its funds in accordance with its rules. A Mr. Cahill had asked for an injunction to restrain the Society from spending money on promoting parliamentary or local government candidatures, or on any purpose not laid down in the Acts regulating Industrial and Provident or Friendly Societies. The judge ruled that, whatever may have been the position under earlier Acts, the Industrial and Provident Societies Act of 1893 gave Co-operative Societies full discretion in applying their profits to any lawful purpose specified in the rules, and that, as the London Society's rules did clearly provide for a political fund, the payments to it were quite in order. Unless the case is taken further, this seems definitely to dispose of the assertion, which has been often made, that the Co-operative Movement may at any time find itself the victim of a second Osborne Judgment. At the same time it is clear that any Co-operative Society which makes political payments without the authority of a rule explicitly providing for them is running a risk. Societies which lack such a rule will presumably be wise to adopt one at once; for "political activities," as the Trade Unions found after the Osborne case, may be construed as covering much more than the running of candidates.

The Position of the Socialist League

The Labour Executive decided by an overwhelming majority to disaffiliate the Socialist League. This does not involve disaffiliating any individual member of the League, though it does mean that Socialist League members like Mr. William Mellor will not receive the Party's endorsement as Labour candidates. It is doubtful how far this will affect the position of Sir Stafford Cripps, whose Bristol supporters have again passed a vote of complete confidence in their Member. Nor do most of the members of the Executive wish to lose Sir Stafford. He is far the best Parliamentarian on the Labour benches, and on many issues is indispensable to the Party. His speech on the dockyard dismissals was the outstanding feature of the debate. He has a great following in the country and has as his colleagues a group of men whom everyone recognises as unusually able and disinterested. The Labour Party is not impervious to the criticism that young people will not join and work for a Party which loses the services of such men and gains the reputation of turning out those who show courage and initiative. On the other side a large number of Socialist League members probably feel that the Unity Manifesto was a mistake in tactics. A "united front" of the extreme Left groups may split the Party but it can achieve little of value as an independent force.

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WILL STALIN EXPLAIN ?

ACCORDING to their confessions Radek, Sokolnikov and the other Old Bolsheviks now on trial for their lives in Moscow have for years been plotting with Trotzky and with Japanese and German Fascists to overthrow the revolutionary regime which they have spent their lives in establishing. Their plan, they tell us, was to seize power for themselves by murdering Stalin and Molotoff; and at the same time to surrender part of Russia's Eastern territory to Japan and the Ukraine to the Germans. Holding that a war with Japan and Germany was inevitable, Radek declares that he and his accomplices arranged to weaken Russia as much as possible. Thousands of railway breakdowns were arranged. Disease germs were to be spread among the populace and acts of sabotage to take place in factories and workshops all over the U.S.S.R.

This is a curious story. The various parts of the plot do not seem to hold together, nor is any adequate motive suggested for such a monstrously perverted enterprise. That the remnant of the old Bolshevik guard should have become critical of Stalin and have wished to supersede him is credible enough. That in a dictatorship they may have been driven to underground intrigues is perfectly possible. But no one acquainted with the personalities and the records of Radek and Sokolnikov will readily believe, on the uncorroborated evidence of these confessions alone, that these men have entered into negotiations with Fascists for the destruction of the Socialist Russia. Radek, a master of vituperation and brilliant analyst of foreign affairs, has been the most influential journalist of the regime. We can imagine him capable of many kinds of trickery, but that he should plot to hand over his country to foreign Fascism puts a heavy strain on credulity. Equally difficult is it to cast Sokolnikov for such a role. An unusually able and apparently devoted servant of the U.S.S.R., he has been acknowledged as one of the principal architects of Russia's financial stability, and perhaps more than any other Russian, he paved the way, as Ambassador in London, for that improved relationship with the Western democracies which has become the pivot of Stalin's foreign policy.

Supposing, however, that we accept the whole of this story as true. Even so, the present trials in Moscow remain incomprehensible. There are two mysteries: the mystery of the confessions, which are equally mysterious whether we accept them as true or not, and the even greater mystery why such trials should now be publicly staged and such confessions broadcast.

None of the explanations given for the confessions seem even plausible. It is unconvincing to ascribe them to the process of cross-examination in which the confessions or anticipated confessions of one conspirator are used to extort confessions from another. Even supposing that, as a result of this process, all the accused men found it impossible to hide their guilt, how astonishing that no one of them should have followed the example of Dimitroff in Berlin and boldly stood up for himself and defended the conspiracy on the ground of patriotism? In the last trial, when the prisoners grovelled in the dirt and declared themselves miserable sinners, we were told that this strange behaviour was the product of Russian masochistic psychology. We were referred to passages in Dostoevsky and Turgenev for similar examples of self-abasement. On this occasion, however, the prisoners do not grovel nor do they boast. Most of them confess almost with a smile. Radek even goes so far as to joke about his coming execution. Such an attitude in the witness box is equally unexplained by allegations of past torture or threats of future torture. There is no sign of anything of the sort. The prisoners are in good health; they speak freely in court and, with the world listening, declare that no pressure has been brought to bear upon them. Confessions, extorted by torture, would certainly be repudiated in open court by one or other of the prisoners; threats to the families of the accused or of torture at a later stage, which might cow the weaker among them, would certainly not succeed in every case where the accused are as experienced and tough a set of men as these. It is no wonder in these circumstances that some quite intelligent people fall back on almost fantastic speculations. Some have suggested that Kameneff and those who were condemned with him are now living *incognito* and in comfort at a Russian watering place and that the present prisoners anticipate a like fate if they make the right confessions. In this case their trial is merely the Russian equivalent of applying for the Chiltern Hundreds. Others talk of a drug which is supposed so to reduce the resistance power of the victim that after he has been hypnotised under its influence he remains convinced of what he has been told even after the immediate effects of the drug have worn off. We want far more evidence than we at present possess of any drug with such terrible potentialities. The mystery of the confessions is still unsolved.

The second, and politically more important, mystery is why Stalin should have permitted a trial so damaging to the interests of his country. What can be the motive for announcing to Japan and Germany that Russian factories have been honeycombed with saboteurs, that they may in time of war be put out of action at a minute's notice? Are such declarations calculated to bring Russia support from the Western democracies? The effect inside Russia must surely be equally damaging. We can imagine nothing more likely to undermine confidence inside the U.S.S.R. than publicly to proclaim that the chief propagandist, whose articles have hounded other men to their death and whose daily declarations have been accepted as the inspired utterances of the Soviet Government, has all the time been a traitor plotting its destruction. Who will now believe in the utterances of Radek's successor? One of the most certain and terrible results of such trials is that it undermines all trust. In whom are the public to have confidence in future? And what must be the effect on public servants waiting in the atmosphere of terror and suspicion engendered by a series of such trials?

We wish that Stalin would explain his reason for putting such a priceless propagandist weapon at the disposal of his enemies in foreign countries. One common assumption is that he is animated by hatred of all the other old associates of Lenin, and in the circumstances comparison is inevitable between events in Russia and the developments of other revolutions where groups have gone on struggling for power long after the revolution was over. But the present trials have more political significance

than this. It is clear that we are witnessing the climax of the long struggle between those who supported Stalin's doctrine of "Socialism in one country" and those who have continued to believe that Trotsky was right in advocating the policy of fomenting world revolution. This struggle reached a new phase at the Seventh Congress where the new policy of the "united front" and co-operation with democratic forces in foreign countries was decided upon. We may regard this trial as a final effort to eliminate any trace of opposition on this fundamental issue before the new Constitution is put into operation. If this is the root of the matter it still remains curious that Stalin should not realise the damaging effect of such a spectacular method of removing his opponents from positions of influence.

It has always been a central part of Communist theory that the time would come when the bourgeoisie would be so far liquidated and the country so far unified under the happier organisation of Communism that conspiracy, espionage and violence would disappear. Russia has advanced economically beyond the hopes of the most enthusiastic Socialist. It seemed as if the time for relaxation of the political dictatorship had arrived. There were signs of a freer atmosphere as well as an improved standard of life. These trials do not encourage any such optimistic view. To doubt the truth of the confessions is to accuse the Soviet Government of a disregard for the most elementary principles of justice. But to accept them as they stand is to draw a picture of a regime divided against itself, a regime in which the leaders are at a deadly feud with each other, a regime in which the only way to express discontent is in conspiracy and the only way to suppress conspiracy mass execution. If there is an escape from this dilemma Stalin should tell us what it is.

GERMAN INFLUENCE IN MOROCCO

WHATEVER may be the truth of the reports of the presence of armed Germans in Spanish Morocco, it is a fact that for many years German political agents have been very active in North Africa. As editor of the Madrid newspaper *Ahora*, I have had several opportunities of getting to the truth of the German influence, which is spread by subtle political propaganda. In view of the present situation, and the events which have culminated in the visit of English and French officers to the Spanish protectorate, my experiences there may be of interest.

I have just returned from Ifni, an ill-defined area on the north-west coast of Africa, about 200 miles due east of the Canaries, and a little more than that distance from Morocco. Ifni is completely bounded inland by French territory and is an ideal place for the political agent with a flair for propaganda. In 1933, I accompanied the Spanish expedition to occupy Ifni. Spain had for centuries held rights over the country without actually controlling it until this expedition was sent out under Colonel Capaz, who had orders to land troops. It was at that time that the French colonial army, operating in North Africa, had routed the rebellious Ait bu Amaran and arrived victoriously as far as the banks of the Draa; but there they stopped, for they could not crown their campaign with complete success until Ifni was occupied and controlled by Spain. Every time the rebels were beaten back they were able to withdraw either into the desert, as did the famous Blue Sultan, or else into Ifni, which was the course taken by Hamou Gaga, chief of the Berber tribe.

Now the Berbers had never known foreign domination, having defied even the Sultan of Morocco; moreover when, as a result of an understanding with France, the Government of the Spanish Republic had sent out an occupational force a few months before the arrival of Capaz, the emissaries had been stoned to death the moment they set foot on the shore. Yet, in spite of all this, the Berbers offered no opposition to the entry of Capaz, for they had meanwhile been told by the German political agents that they would thus make an ally of Spain against France. Capaz must have had a shrewd idea of this changed disposition when he landed from his troopship with only one officer and a sailor.

I was one of the first to follow him on shore and soon after I met Hamou Gaga. I noticed that the Spanish officers treated him more as a friend than as one who had come under their authority. Hamou was an impressive figure and a sharp contrast was struck between his picturesque Oriental robes and a heavy automatic, of the latest German pattern, which he carried.

When I paid a special visit to Ifni this month I found the attitude of the Spanish officers towards the chief had by no means altered. At the invitation of Hamou I talked with a number of tribal leaders, who gave the impression of being true feudal lords, receiving us as guests and friends. The most intelligent and educated of them, Chej Said, gave me some most significant information.

I asked him: "Did any Europeans try to settle here before the Spaniards?"

"No, we never allowed them to settle," he replied, "though I know that about 70 years ago an Englishman arrived. He wanted to set up a trading station for timber, and he was such an honest, peaceful fellow that we let him stay and he lived here happily for many years. The road on which we are marching was built by him. It was the only one in the country before the Spaniards came. Sometimes Jews have tried to settle here, but we have soon got rid of them (and at the mention of Jews Chej Said, being a true Arab, disdainfully drew his finger across his throat). Germans are the only outsiders we have tolerated always. They were here some time before the Spaniards."

"Are the Germans here for trade?" I asked.

The chief, obviously proud of this relationship, smiled benevolently and answered, "Oh, no, they are here for political reasons. Germans are good friends of the Arab!"

I spent two days in the interior during which I visited many villages. As a result I have learned much about the reason for the friendliness of the natives towards the Spanish soldiery. The German agents had been busy, for in all my conversations with the tribal chiefs the same queries were raised. "What will happen to Spain? Will she solve her problems and be a stronger nation than France? Is Madrid as big as Casablanca? Have you Spaniards guns as powerful as those of the French?" No other subject interested them. Their minds had obviously been made accustomed to the idea that the Spanish army would be their ally against France. It was evident that they were falling in with the principles advocated in German propaganda.

These are the facts of the situation to-day. On the one side is the Spanish Government, which paid for the costly expedition in 1933, and financed the occupation of Ifni, thus keeping loyal to France and striving for their mutual security; on the other hand is the Spanish army, which was trusted to undertake the task of occupation, but has instead served opposite interests—those of German nationalism. There is little doubt that as long as three years ago the Spanish military forces laid the plans for their rebellion.

The natives hope to obtain their independence with the aid of the Germans. It is a somewhat vague idea in their minds, but it is based on reality. When, in 1916, the Atlas tribes revolted under the Blue Sultan, they arrived triumphantly as far as Marraquesh. Those warriors were armed and trained by Germany. Only two years have passed since the time I interviewed the Blue Sultan, who had taken refuge in the

Spanish possession of Rio de Oro, after crossing the desert with his children and wives. After long resistance he had been routed by the French and had lost all his influence over the natives. But the Blue Sultan dreamed in exile of the time when his star would shine again. The day would come, he told himself, when the European nationalists, fighting among themselves, would provide an opportunity for the establishing of Mussulman nationalism.

The Blue Sultan had lost confidence in religion as a means of keeping the natives together, and realised that nationalism would be a much stronger force. He was a great admirer of the nationalist leaders, such as Mustapha Kemal, Mussolini and Hitler. Hitler, in fact, seemed a sort of god to him. I was at the time astonished that this uneducated Moor, who spoke little besides Berber, should have so clear an understanding of European affairs. I have since realised that this was because the Germans spread propaganda in the Berber language. *Mein Kampf* has been translated into Arabic and other tongues of Islam.

I returned to Spain soon after this interview and published several articles from the Spanish point of view. The Spanish military authorities objected strongly to my outspoken comments, and the Governor of the Spanish Sahara, who had permitted me the interview, was strongly reproved. The Spanish army was then ready to enter the sphere of action of the German and Italian nationalisms. It became more and more disloyal to the Republic and neglected its legitimate duties. During the last three years Ifni, occupied by the pro-German and pro-Italian Spanish army, has been the mainspring of the activities of the German political agents in Morocco and the Sahara. The Ifni garrison is the most strongly pro-Fascist of them all, and has done its best to facilitate the work of these agents.

The visit of the English and French officers and journalists may convince everyone that there are very few, or even no armed Germans in Morocco, but this will not alter the fact that the German political work out there is marching on, quiet but powerful. And the fact that the Ait bu Amaran tribe is now helping the attack on Madrid suggests that the dream of the Blue Sultan may yet be fulfilled. M. C. NOGALES

A LONDON DIARY

I DARESAY that a good many readers saw the posters of the *Daily Express* the other day, A Book That *Must* Be Banned, and wisely thought no more about it. But the whole incident connected with this poster raises once more the question of our ridiculous laws regarding obscene literature and obscene libels. If you had bought the *Daily Express* in order to discover what it was all about, you would have found an article by Mr. James Douglas, trying to repeat with a book of which he gave neither title nor author what he had achieved with *The Well of Loneliness*. The book had made poor Mr. Douglas "choke and gasp for fresh air." Although he did not give the title or the author, he gave so much detailed information about the book that thousands of his readers were enabled to identify it as *The Other Half*, by John Worby, published by Messrs. Dent. Thousands of Mr. Douglas's readers like to read pornography and they rushed off to their libraries and booksellers to get hold of the book which Mr. Douglas had so ingenuously recommended to them. I am told that the day after the article appeared the first edition was sold out, the next day the second impression which was being printed had already been sold out, and orders for thousands of copies could not be supplied. I am also assured on good authority (I have not read the book myself) that any normally minded person who buys this book for pornographic purposes will be seriously disappointed. It would, of course, be possible for Mr. Douglas and people like him to raise an outcry against some innocuous book every now and again, whatever the law might be, but there is no doubt that their inconsistent antics are considerably facilitated by the law as it is. Thanks to Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, the test of legal obscenity is so wide and so vague that almost any book, certainly any novel dealing with sex, can be brought under it; in consequence, if once the police take action against a book, acquittal or condemnation depends, not upon whether the book is or is not pornographic, but upon how much sexual sanity or insanity there is in the mind of the person who tries the case. This not only makes acquittals and condemnations ludicrously erratic, but it also encourages erratic prosecutions. Any prosecution has a chance of succeeding, and therefore whether prosecutions are encouraged or discouraged depends upon the sexual sanity of the prosecuting authorities. A particularly sane ex-Attorney-General told me the other day that he was perpetually amazed, when in office, at the number and absurdity of the proposals for prosecution which were put before him, and that the language of the official papers and informations which came before him seemed to show that the original arbiters of our literary works from the point of view of morality are always ordinary police constables.

* * *

A publisher of my acquaintance tells me that this indecency question is one of the nightmares of his profession, not as menacing, of course, as the threat of some ruinous libel action which always hangs above his prematurely grey head, but quite bad enough. It is not merely that at any moment some apparently innocent book published by him may be prosecuted and "banned," but the erratic method of prosecution and condemnation is reflected in the nervousness of printers and the unpredictable reactions of the circulating libraries. A few years ago one of the largest printers in the south of England gave him an estimate for printing a book of short stories by a well-known writer. It was accepted and the work was put in hand. A week later he was asked (in the politest way) to relieve them of the contract, as they considered the work "indecent." He did so; the book was printed by another large printing firm and was accepted by all the libraries and was not prosecuted. Shortly after this he published a novel, which had no "sex" interest in it at all, and, if he had been asked a week before publication, he would have said that it was about as "indecent" as Mill "On Liberty." The book was travelled and all the circulating libraries ordered copies. A week before publication one of the largest of these libraries cancelled its order. On inquiry, he was told that the library could not stock the book as it was indecent, owing to a single word which would be found on page so-and-so. None of the other libraries discovered the word or, at any rate, its indecency.

* * *

As a practising motorist of some ten years' experience, I am continually amazed at the proposals which are confidently put forward in the press and elsewhere for making the roads safe for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists. My own opinion, let me begin by stating, is that 50 per cent. of the roads in the south of England on which I habitually drive could not possibly be "safe" if traffic exceeded 25 miles an hour, and that I and nearly everyone else using them for cars drive at some speed between 35 and 80, and that another 25 per cent. of the roads could not be safe if traffic exceeded 15 miles an hour, whereas I and nearly everyone who drives on them do so at some speed between 25 and 50. These roads are all extremely narrow for the volume of traffic upon them; they are full of turns and twists, and blind corners, and road junctions to which no rule as to right of way applies. Besides the cars travelling upon them at any speed from five miles an hour to 80 miles an hour, there are mixed up in inextricable confusion children, stationary or travelling at anything up to six miles an hour, pedestrians travelling at anything up to four miles an hour; cyclists wobbling along at anything up to 12 miles an hour; dogs in or out of control; perambulators attended or unattended; suicidal chickens, flocks of sheep, herds of cattle or even pigs. It follows that with such different forms of traffic moving at such different rates of speed in such erratic directions, the road cannot be "safe" unless every vehicle upon it is moving

at such a speed that it can in any emergency stop pretty nearly within its own length. I forget the exact minimum distance in which the most powerful brakes will pull up a car going at 35 miles an hour, but it is many times its own length.

* * *

Remembering this, consider the following three (out of many similar) precepts given in the *Times* by an experienced motorist as the only remedy for the present road slaughter. He says that every motor driver should firmly determine that the car he is driving shall not be involved in an accident :

> by (*a*) assuming that there is always someone or something round the next bend to be avoided ;
> (*b*) every cyclist or pedestrian whom he is overtaking will move into his path ;
> (*c*) a car or cyclist will suddenly emerge from the next cross-road.

Now, if I followed these precepts strictly on the roads which I use, in the south of England, for at least half the time that I drive I should have to drive at something between 10 and 15 miles an hour, and over and over again, the only way of complying with precept (*b*) would mean abandoning the car and taking to a cycle or my feet. I do not say that the precepts are not sound ; they are, but they simply show that motoring on the roads as they are and with the mixture of traffic as it is cannot possibly be " safe." The roads can only be made safe for cars travelling at modern speeds, provided that (*a*) they are constructed for traffic moving, not at eight, but at 80 miles an hour, and (*b*) are restricted to motor traffic. I understand that the recommendations which the Ministry of Transport is about to make to the local authorities go some way in this direction, since they insist upon the necessity for standardising the width of roads and of separating the various classes of users.

* * *

A correspondent writes to me with regard to what I said about " progressive " schoolgirls a week or two ago that it reminded him of the German saying, " Andre städtchen, andre mädchen " and of the following story which he heard in Germany in the years before the Nazi regime abolished the progressive school. A family in a large town had to move from one district to another, and one of the children, a girl of eight, who had been to an old-fashioned school, was now sent to a very modern one where much, including discipline, was left to the children's initiative. After she had been there for a bit, someone asked her whether she did not prefer it to her old school. " I don't like it at all," she said ; " you see, in our old school you *have* to do what you want " (" da *muss* man ja tun was man will "). My correspondent suggests that this little girl threw considerable light upon the subject of " liberty and authority in education." I agree, but I feel that she made a valuable contribution to an even larger subject, " liberty and authority in the modern world." Unhappily we train people from the cradle to be frightened of liberty and only to feel happy if they are being put through the goose-step both in work and play by some higher " authority." " The longer I live," said a wise old scholar, " the more convinced I become that people like to be deceived "—and they like to be deceived into believing that they like to do what they are made to do.

* * *

A number of enquiries have been made about Critic. He wishes me to say that he is once again in good health and in excellent spirits at the prospect of being a long way from London and from journalism for some weeks. Mr. Cyril Connolly, who is now in Spain, will probably be writing the London Diary after next week.

* * *

In the middle of its solemn and judicial leader on the Moscow trials the *Times* broke out as follows :—

> Searching for truth in the tangled mass of evidence is like prodding about in the rough on a misty day for a ball that is probably out of bounds.

It is fascinating to speculate on the problem this metaphor will set for the unfortunate translators in Moscow, Tokio, Belgrade and Mexico City. It is something that the *Times* did not go on to accuse Stalin of body-line bowling and the Ogpu of hooking the ball before it was properly in the scrum. The *Times* should specialise in steady driving from the base-line : when it comes up to the net it is apt to indulge in some rather wild slashing.

HYPOCRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

Our prize of 5/- for the contribution at the head of the column goes this week to Mr. G. A. Hobbs.

All cuttings should be addressed to " This England," 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1.

Mr. Ford plays an American racketeer who finds redemption in khaki and within a year has died a hero's death in China. If that doesn't stimulate recruiting I don't know what will.—*Daily Telegraph.*

A Beautiful Block of Suites and Flatlets, opposite the Town house of the Viceroy of India. . . . Ground floor restaurants for tenants, among whom are members of the peerage.—Advt. in *Daily Telegraph.*

The Countess of Rosebery's gift to her daughter is an ermine fur coat, a black broadtail fur coat and diamond clip earrings, and the Earl of Rosebery has given her a blue fox fur cape. Their presents to the bridegroom are two ice machines and a bay brood mare named Lavinia.—The *Times.*

I would compel all husbands and wives to have a small dot tattooed on the left ear. No disfigurement, but definite evidence of marriage. Bigamy is responsible for much crime and misery. The dot would protect the unsuspecting woman.—Letter in *Daily Express.*

"SPORT" IN INDIA

WITHIN the memory of men still middle-aged, India and Burma, meeting-place of three faunas, held such African forms as the lion, caracal, cheetah, wild ass : the Indonesian gibbons and tapir ; the splendid Himalayan pheasants. Now, over vast regions, the woods are shot out and empty ; and these creatures are all on the danger list.

One decade exterminated the lion. Half a dozen were shot at Guna, Gwalior, in 1862 ; then in following years two near Allahabad, two near Ahmadnagar, four in Jodhpur and one (the last in Central India) at Guna again, in 1873 ; a handful in Junagadh, Kathiawar, were saved. They have since increased, and seem on good terms with the people. One recently tumbled into a well, and was helped out with ropes. Foreign visitors of sufficient social status are allowed to bag them (several British peers have done this). Neighbouring Princes poach them, and there is said to be a waiting list of Princes who have been " promised " a lion.

Indian lions may survive. Not so Indian asses, which are shot from cars, as are other animals. The press asks you to admire the Rajah of This or the Nawab of That, who can drive at thirty miles an hour, bowling over antelopes right and left. The cheetah is often said to be extinct. But last summer four were seen together, and three were shot inside of five minutes, by a Prince who must have done it from a car, the cheetah being the fastest thing on four legs. (Cars have been helpful also in bagging the Transjordan ostriches ; and in Ceylon their head-lights are used to immobilise creatures on jungle roads at night.) When this sport first came in, it was considered rather low-class ; I remember the indignation in 1917 in Mespot, when staff cars arrived from the desert with their bonnets adorned with dead gazelles. We have got over this squeamishness.

Thirty years ago, there were three species of rhinoceros on the Indo-Burmese list. There are now two, both excessively scarce. The wild buffalo is all but gone. Four or five pairs of pink-headed duck survive. And so on.

How has this all happened, and so quickly ? By pressure of population (of course). Also, of commerce ; the musk-deer die for their pods, and rhino for their horns (to which

China ascribes medicinal properties). It is hard to enforce game laws and keep down gun licences. And I have heard it said, often and often, when a shoot was being arranged during a close season, that game laws were "for boxwallahs, not for us."

But the chief butchers have been highly placed sportsmen. One of these (still in India) has remarked, "I arrived and immediately began to use a gun on every possible occasion." He was in Bharatpur "on both occasions when between forty and fifty guns in one day bagged 4,082 duck, in December, 1914, and 4,026 in November, 1916." When the Viceroy visited Bikaner, in February, 1929, 10,977 sandgrouse were shot in two days; one of the party (with three loaders and four guns) bagged 903 birds in one morning. In Kashmir, about the same time, seven guns averaged 303 kills (109 geese, 297 mallards, 588 gadwall, 114 pintail, 9 widgeon, 248 shoveller, 155 pochard, 603 teal—2,123 birds in one day). Sportsmen complain that duck are getting terribly rare!

Of course wild creatures often behave very badly, and richly deserve what they get. In Kashmir, "the Rajah told" a Viceroy's wife "blood-curdling stories of wounded bears springing into *machans* . . . and I thought of Minto and my daughters and hoped they were well out of reach of infuriated animals." They were. "In the space of an hour we had five bears lying dead around the *machan;* one monster made a spring towards us, but rolled over with a roar after receiving a welcome in the shape of a bullet from the Rajah as well as one from myself . . . the result of our day's shoot was thirty-one bears." Colonel Pollok, who once shot forty-four rhino in five weeks, in the Bhutan Doars came upon a herd of sixteen of these wicked brutes "making their diabolical noises" and punished them suitably. "I had four rifles and my smooth-bore with me" (he was on an elephant); he killed two of the "pertinacious devils," "severely wounded" another two (who escaped), and damaged most of the rest.

My own standpoint, which I know is eccentric, is that a country's fauna is part of its natural features, something in which everyone has some right. Nor can I understand the assumption that we are entitled to deal out agony for our pleasure. But I know the difference between an occasional day in the jungle (finding your own game) and the ceremonial blood sacrifices which always finish off august visitations. If anything is to be done for India's fauna, we must get some civilised feeling into its rulers' brains. It will be difficult. Viceroys almost inevitably are conventional-minded, and some much-admired Princes are merely barbarians who have acquired fluency in regimental mess English.

This sub-adolescence of its rulers is one of many factors that keep India mentally a museum. A South African statesman spoke to me of his people's astonishment at the Indian convention of "sport." After Kruger Park and his own country's conservation of beautiful interesting creatures, India seemed childish. One Rajah had just ordered his subjects to maffick because he had bagged his 500th tiger; another had "established a record" by shooting thirty-three tigers in four weeks! The press every week was sycophantically extolling the Viceroy's steady prowess and exulting in Her Excellency's panthers. Simla, the proletariat were assured, was all congratulations because their youngest daughter, "much to her delight and satisfaction," had secured yet another bear. It struck visitors to India as queer.

It more and more strikes India as queer, too. Everyone except these innocents from England knows how such things are "fixed." Men tell how a Royal Personage found the claws of a slain tiger gilded in anticipation of the honour that was to come to it; how a Viceroy in glee at success rushed down from his *machan* to see his victim—before the ropes that bound it had been untied. One celebrated tiger (it figures in a Viceroy's letters), suffering from overeating and under-exercise while waiting for doom, began to waste away from diarrhoea. The nearest vet, a Bengali, was ordered to see to it. He doped its food with opium, and it grew stout again, living in an iridescent dream in which it hardly knew death when it arrived! The vet demanded double Travelling Allowance, "on account of dangerous character of patient!" Legends? Not all of them. Five years ago, watching preparations for a Commander-in-Chief's visit to a Native State, I was told, "Only His Excellency will get a tiger. But we are making arrangements that each member of his Staff shall have a leopard or a bear or a sambur." "Where is His Excellency's tiger?" I asked. "She is sleeping in a nulla over there." Only people fresh from outside could suppose that thirty-one bears normally populated one hillside, or seven tigers (a Viceroy's morning bag) a single acre! Immense spaces are combed out and denuded, and weeks of close shepherding precede these holocausts, which are followed by careful nursing to provide the next one. Sandgrouse, living in deserts, visit the nearest pools between sunrise and noon; and those massive bags are composed of birds that have been kept from water until desperate with thirst, so that they rush in madly when at last allowed access.

India is the only Dominion with a great fauna that is doing practically nothing to preserve it. There was a Conference on Preservation, two years ago, and the United Provinces started a sanctuary, the first. Malaya has one also. But that is about all. India is far behind even Ceylon.

Mysore (which is what we might expect) is more awake than any other State. It contains districts which (like the American and Canadian National Parks) combine a splendid fauna with superb scenery. If these could be made into sanctuaries, the wild life, brought back to abundance and fearlessness, would be an attraction, and tourist traffic would pay expenses. Another State concerning which I cherish hopes is Hyderabad, which has done a magnificent job of preservation in the Ajanta Caves frescoes. If the exquisite scenery around them—the deep ravine and river, the wooded hills—could become a sanctuary, this would wonderfully appeal to Indian sentiment. We might see everything again as the saffron-robed ascetics (disciples of the Buddha, with his teaching of mercy to all that lives) saw it in the morning of time—the peacocks glowing through the wilderness, the deer coming down to the stream. Then there is Parasnath, Bihar's highest mountain, in a lovely district of river and forest. The mountain is sacred to the Jains, whose religion forbids the taking of life; this wealthy community might surely lead a movement to save the whole region as a National Park.

Last of all, may one not appeal to the Princes? Will not Their Highnesses put the whole matter—of Fauna Preservation and National Parks—on the agenda of their Chamber? It is Coronation Year. What better way could be found of celebrating it?

EDWARD THOMPSON

SHAME THE DEVIL

IN war, it has been said, truth is always the first casualty. It is a profound saying and yet in one respect misleading, since it implies that truth goes into war in sound condition. Unfortunately, even in peace-time truth is something of a cripple, constantly being waylaid and bruised and left badly in need of attention from a good Samaritan. Truth, indeed, has for as long as anybody can remember, hobbled about looking like "one of the ruins that Cromwell knocked about a bit"—that tragic figure of whom Marie Lloyd used to sing. In wartime the unhappy creature merely gets knocked about still more violently, still more disastrously. Sandbagged, bound and gagged, with her eyes bandaged, she looks a mere wreck of her former self. Yet, as I have suggested, her former self was nothing to boast of. All that has happened is that a comparative wreck has become a superlative wreck.

I sometimes wonder whether truth has not grown increasingly feeble during my own lifetime. Did people always lie as freely as they lie to-day? I seldom read the report of a prosecution of a motorist without feeling that lying must be a good deal easier than it used to be. In one case after another it becomes perfectly clear that either the police are lying or

the motorist and his friends are lying. The police say, for example, that just before an accident the motorist was travelling at between 60 and 70 miles an hour. The motorist and his friends give evidence that he was travelling at between 30 and 35 miles an hour. In cases such as this the lying must be deliberate. Even in the roughest estimate it is impossible to confuse a speed of 70 miles an hour with a speed of 35. Unfortunately, it is sometimes difficult to tell which side is fabricating the evidence. The police, admirable a body of men though they are, cannot all be George Washingtons. And the motorists—many of whom, perhaps even most of whom, are good fathers, good mothers, good husbands, good wives, good sons or good daughters—would certainly not all come through the cherry-tree test with flying colours.

Can it be that there is something demoralising in the possession of a motor car? Is there any other invention that has led so many human beings from the strict path of truth? The fishing-rod, it may be urged. But angling was never a universal cult like motoring. The golf ball? As to that, I have never found any substantiation of the theory that golfers are given to lying about the number of their strokes. The croquet mallet? Ah, yes! there is—or used to be—plenty of lying and cheating on the croquet lawn. (This itself may be a lie, for I am merely repeating gossip.) But, even if we take the darkest view of croquet, does the imagination of the croquet-player ever rise to the same heights as the imagination of the motorist? It was Lord Hewart, I think, who once said that he was constantly trying cases about head-on collisions between two cars, each of them on its own side of the road and each stationary. To own a motor car is for many people to enter the spiritual company of Grimm and Hans Andersen. The motorist possesses a magic wand by means of which, when giving evidence, he can transform a dozen bottles of Bass into two light lagers or a skinful of whisky into one small Scotch and a couple of aspirins taken as a cure for influenza. Then there is a small band of motorists—not one in a thousand, I am sure, even among those who cause fatal accidents—who explain that they did not stop after an accident because they did not realise that they had knocked someone down. I am not suggesting that this excuse is always untrue, but I have myself been in a car which knocked down a small boy who had run without warning into the road, and, though the car swerved enough to catch only his elbow, no one could have mistaken the bump for anything but what it was. Hence I cannot believe that all the motorists who say that they did not understand the meaning of the bump are speaking the truth.

The court of law, however, the object of which is to discover the truth, seems to foster the spirit of lying. If one believed all the defendants, one would be driven to the conclusion that scarcely any but innocent people are prosecuted in England. Murderers often seem able almost to convince themselves of their innocence. Fraudulent company promoters wear the air of wronged Sunday-school teachers. And the more they swear they are speaking the truth, the more stoutly they lie. An oath, indeed, instead of preventing human beings from lying, seems to encourage many of them to lie by making the lie sound more plausible. Perjury in the name of God savours of saintliness.

It is, perhaps, foolish to expect criminals to tell the truth when we who are still outside the gaols give them so poor an example. Even politicians do not always speak the truth. They become extremely indignant when accused of making false statements, but they find it curiously easy to believe that their opponents make false statements. "A frigid and calculated lie," was Lord Balfour's description of a remark made by a Liberal Minister. "Allow me to call the honourable gentleman a damned liar," was the reply of John Dillon to the suggestion of Joseph Chamberlain that he was a "good judge of traitors." If the word "liar" were not forbidden in the House of Commons as unparliamentary, I am sure that it would be hurled backwards and forwards from back bench to back bench—perhaps, even from front bench to front bench—during many a critical debate. For people who are most convinced that it would be impossible for themselves to tell lies are the most convinced that it is possible for other people to tell lies. Half the lies that are told, I agree, are involuntary. They are the result of bad observation or bad memory—observation or memory coloured by prejudice. Many people are incapable of seeing the truth or of hearing the truth or of remembering the truth. They misunderstand even the plainest statements, if made by an opponent. I remember how a good many years ago an editor was sent a copy of a new paper, the organ of a hostile party, with a slip asking for "the favour of a review." In the following week's issue he declared that he had been asked by the rival editor for "a favourable review," expressed the deepest indignation at this piece of impudence, and went on to tear the paper to pieces. Now, that editor was a man of noble character beyond the common, who regarded "liar" as the most damning epithet that could be applied to a human being; yet, when his prejudices were engaged, he believed simply what he wanted to believe about those who were opposed to him.

It is one of the vices of propaganda that the propagandist becomes more and more tempted to sacrifice the truth to the cause. In propaganda, as in war, truth is the first casualty. In dictatorial countries, where propaganda flourishes like horse-radish in a Steyning garden, to tell more than half the truth would be treason. Sometimes one wonders whether the propagandists are themselves deceived or whether they are simply gallant liars sacrificing their souls for their country's sake. Whichever may be the case, they are making it very difficult for the ordinary man in other countries to believe a word they say. It is an old saying that a diplomatist is a man who is sent abroad to lie for his country: looking at the world to-day, a cynic might say that a Government is a body of men kept at home to lie for their country. And where Governments lead, their partisans enthusiastically follow. Everything good that is told about Ruritania, they declare, is true: everything bad that is told about it is lies. As for Urbitania, everything bad that is told about it is true, and everything good that is told about it is lies. It is all very bewildering to ordinary human beings. These huge nations of Yes-men cannot all be speaking the truth, especially as they are forbidden to say No.

What then, are we ordinary people to believe? We must believe somebody or something, and yet we are finding it more and more difficult to believe anybody or anything. We have grown particularly suspicious of "the truth about" this, that, and the other. "The truth about" is usually propaganda. Unlike jesting Pilate, when we ask "What is truth?" to-day, we do stay for an answer. And the loudest answer that comes comes from the throats of ten thousand propagandists. And we do not—we cannot—believe it.

"Truth is mighty and will prevail." It will prevail in Europe only when we are all as eager to know and to tell the truth about our own side as the truth about the other.

Y. Y.

Correspondence

THE UNITED FRONT

SIR,—With much of what your leading article has to say about the present inaction of the Labour Party no true Socialist will quarrel, but it is regrettable that justifiable discontent with the party's leadership should have led you to aggravate the position by giving support to an opportunist move for spurious unity on the part of the Socialist League. Will you permit me to put forward a point of view held by many active members of the League, which differs radically from the attitude of Mitchison and other League leaders.

The Constitution of the Socialist League lays it down that members must play their part in the Labour, the Trade Unions and in the Co-operative Party for the purpose of making socialists.

If words have meaning at all, we must interpret the object of the League as tending towards the assumption of leadership by its members in local branches strictly within the framework of the party's rules, regulations and conference decisions. And, in fact, such were the instructions given to members by the very leaders, who have now turned tail. The majority of us came into the League on this understanding.

Let it be said at once that the League's activities made little impression on members of the wider movement. Our talk of unity with the Communist Party actually alienated those who would otherwise have been willing to listen to us. There must be no underestimating the feeling against the Communist Party in the rank and file of the various sections of the Labour Party, whether we agree with it or not. Realising this, our leaders began to break the bounds of the League's constitution by indulging in open attacks on the Labour Party from the public platform, which course made the position of League members much more difficult in their respective spheres of activity within the Party. The result could be seen in the small membership of the League. The original object of educating the rank and file, and working solely within the framework of the greater Party, was gradually abandoned.

The much advertised Unity agreement now in operation is only a logical step on the slippery road to wilderness and ineffectualness. It is a complete desertion of the principles governing the League's constitution. The net result so far is the destruction of such influence as the League managed to acquire in some sections of the greater Movement after years of effort on the part of its members.

Without a mandate the leaders took it upon themselves to negotiate the precious agreement; or rather some of the leaders, since it is now clear that some members of the National Council were, and still are, opposed to this betrayal of the League's *raison d'être*. The members were kept completely in the dark; information being refused to branches until the very last day before the special delegate conference. We were presented then with a "fait accompli." The majority of only eighteen, obtained by the Council at the conference, was due to certain delegates breaking their mandate to vote against the proposals. Some branches in strong opposition were not represented at all, such as the one at Manchester with a membership of over 125. Even so, the small and insignificant majority was secured by associating the only motion before the delegates with a vote of confidence in the leadership, also by the bland assurance given by Stafford Cripps, that those in control at Transport House were actually trembling at the knees, and that disaffiliation was, therefore, not likely to follow.

There is no gainsaying the fact, that the course now being followed is a betrayal of the League's programme and policy in many respects. Disintegration has already set in. In the end, what will remain of the membership is more likely to be absorbed by the Communist Party. We must face the fact, that close association with banned elements will find no support in the wider ranks of the Labour Party or the Trade Unions. We cannot ignore the great bitterness in existence against the shifting tactics of the Communists. The new move may have the effect of causing even greater disunity than ever and of driving large sections more to the right.

Unity there must come, but true and real unity through the Labour Party. The present factional agreement is compromising, unreal and one-sided. You very appositely termed it a Disunity Front. Consciously or unconsciously, the pass is being sold by individuals to the Communist leaders, who are bent on disrupting the Labour Party and the Trade Unions from within, whatever they may say to disguise their real intentions. The new Unity agreement is much more than joint action for certain limited objectives. The clue was given by J. Murphy, when he was still General Secretary of the League, by the statement he made, that the function of the League was to bring the Communist Party into the Labour Party and then merge into it. The new agreement is a step in this direction.

M. S. DAVIDSON

[Our correspondent is mistaken in saying that we gave support to the Unity Manifesto. On the contrary we explicitly deplored the Socialist League's tactics and merely urged the Labour Party not to use its legitimate opportunity for making things worse.—ED. N.S. & N.]

WELSH NATIONALISM

SIR,—The Welsh Fire Trial and Mr. Michael Nathan's article have drawn the attention of a wider public to issues with which we in Wales have been long familiar. It would be a great pity, however, if the sympathy of your readers with Welsh Nationalism in the specific matter of the Llyn Peninsula aerodrome were allowed to create an attitude of sympathy with or even indifference to the wider aspects of Welsh Nationalism.

Wales has a population of two and a half million, a small proportion of whom are monoglot Welsh-speakers. The proportion of Welsh speakers varies, and increases generally from south to north and from east to west. But only one-fifth of the total population lives in the western counties, where 60 per cent. or more of the people speak Welsh. The vast majority of the people of South Wales would be grossly insulted if one doubted their Welshness, but English is the native and natural language of the bulk of them, as it is of the Scotch. In Glamorgan (excluding cosmopolitan Cardiff, but including Merthyr and Swansea) live half of the whole population of Wales, and here 337,000 people speak both languages, 25,000 speak only Welsh, and 580,000 speak no Welsh, their only language being English. This is the result of intimate contact with England since the Norman Conquest, if not before, legal and political union for several hundreds of years, and economic development under English influences, and with consequent immigration of large non-Welsh elements, who without adopting the Welsh tongue have assimilated a characteristic and rich local individuality. It should be noted in passing that in non-Welsh-speaking Wales every encouragement is given to children who wish to learn Welsh.

Welsh Nationalism, like other nationalisms, literally makes a fetish of the Welsh language. Surely, sooner or later, mankind will realise what a curse this worship of a mere means of communication has turned out to be! But in Wales the language is coming to be a test applied as rigorously as the Aryan test in Germany: the boy of Welsh parents who pursues his career in English is coming to be regarded with the same holy horror as a German who contracts an alliance with a Jewess. The result is bound to be not the enrichment of Wales but its impoverishment. The free exchange of civil servants, teachers, local government officials and others between the two countries has been of benefit to both. Once a language test is imposed three deplorable consequences will follow: Welsh authorities will not be as well served as they are at present, because of the restriction of choice; Welshmen will find increasing difficulty in obtaining posts in England; and, as a consequence of the above, a Fascist movement will arise, based on the inability of a poor country to provide employment for a sufficiently high proportion of its educated youth.

No one wishes to disparage Welsh as a language. In fact, it is a tongue of quite exceptional poetic beauty, and no one would say that it is inferior to English in any way. But all that is quite beside the point. Language is a means of communication, and what the world needs at the present moment is that communication should be made easy. Nationalists say that the disappearance of ancient tongues will mean that a dull uniformity of thought and behaviour will take the place of vigorous individuality. But the individual differences that enrich life are not necessarily matters of language difference at all—Bernard Shaw, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the reader, and his next-door neighbour all speak English!

For the above reasons we should regard Welsh Nationalism with suspicion, and determine that, whatever concessions to the Welsh language may legitimately be demanded for the areas in Wales populated by monoglot Welsh-speakers, we should refuse to adopt any policy that will check the free movement of population and of ideas between different parts of the United Kingdom.

ANGLO-WELSHMAN

WORKING CONDITIONS OF WAITERS

SIR,—Mr. Layton accuses your waiter of bias; these few comments on his letter may show that he himself might not be found innocent on a similar charge.

First, does Mr. Layton think that the waiters who pay a weekly premium to the head waiter were responsible for the inauguration of the practice, and does he defend this disgraceful form of graft?

Secondly, Mr. Layton says that there is "probably" sufficient food left over for the staff to have "something quite good to eat." Would Mr. Layton himself be content to rely on a "probable" sufficiency for his meals, and is "quite good" his standard for the quality of his own meals?

Thirdly, "certain odd jobs" is a curious description of carrying up three flights of stairs cases of spirits, wines and beer (Mr. Layton, by the way, calls this "carrying a case of wine"), chairs,

tables and crates of silver and crockery; buffet tables, coffee urns, and cash registers; and of shifting a band-stand, two pianos and a tobacco kiosk.

Fourthly, I doubt if the 70,000 unemployed catering workers would agree with Mr. Layton that a job can "quite easily" be obtained.

Lastly, Mr. Layton suggests that there are tasks more irksome to a waiter than those described; if that is so it is difficult to see how the article "merely exaggerates all the bad points" of the profession.

MERLIN

Hampstead.

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. T. A. Layton, correctly points out that there are many worse jobs in catering than that of a waiter. There are many married men, working in shameful conditions and receiving no more than 27*s.* 6*d.* for a 70-hour week, but this does not justify the implication that a waiter's job is not really bad after all.

It is difficult to arrive at the likely income of a waiter, but I have reliable sources of information that indicate 50*s.* per week, including tips, as the highest average income to be expected by a waiter in South Coast hotels. In many cases these waiters work a minimum of 70 hours a week (and in one case I know of 76½ hours) for a six and a half day week; the half day commencing at 3 p.m. During about eight weeks of the holiday season it is customary to work a seven-day week.

At the same time I must repeat that there are *many* worse jobs in catering than that of a waiter.

My experience of the tronc system has been rather different from that of Miss Whittaker. I have not heard any complaints from the waiters regarding the principle, but only objections to the large proportion that goes to the maître d'hôtel. It is customary for the tronc to be in charge of a senior waiter or wine butler, and to be shared out periodically, in fixed proportions, in the presence of one of the ordinary waiting staff. This, to my mind, is a safeguard for the waiters as it prevents the head waiter from starving a particular station—a form of discipline not entirely unknown.

One head waiter, at an hotel where there was no tronc system, informed me that he would not institute it as it would prevent him working his men such long hours—they do between 70 and 80 per week. In fairness, it should be pointed out that the head waiter himself works over 90 hours each week.

Lack of ventilation, irregular hours, and poor food cause high death and disease rates, in some cases 50 per cent. above normal.

HOTEL WORKER

PRIVACY IN THE PRESS

SIR,—Your editorial paragraph concerning the crucifying by certain newspapers of the relatives of those who meet with violent deaths or other misfortunes does not overstate the foulness of this ever-growing practice.

I am one of those who have to telephone and interview personally those unhappy victims of the modern lust for sensation at any cost. This degradation has to be endured, at present, unless one is prepared to sacrifice one's means of livelihood and be thrown on a market sadly limited by rationalisation and amalgamation.

Mr. Francis Iles, in a review of the Rattenbury case, declares, uncompromisingly, that "Mrs. Rattenbury was, for all practical purposes, hounded to her death by reporters."

He adds: "One day, perhaps, a reporter of the gutter press, in a fit of decency, will murder the proprietor who gives him his orders, and then we shall have a trial worth hearing."

Can nothing be done by journalists of repute, such as Mr. Iles himself, Mr. Ivor Brown and Mr. Henry Nevinson, acting in concert with the newspaper professional organisations, to put a term to this evil? I feel sure that with their backing a "Purge the Press" Committee could effectually shame the offenders and clean up these "yellow" stables.

UNHAPPY REPORTER

ANTHROPOLOGY AT HOME

SIR,—Man is the last subject of scientific investigation. A century ago Darwin focused the camera of thought on to man as a sort of animal whose behaviour and history would be explained by science. In 1847, Marx formulated a scientific study of economic man. In 1865, Tylor defined the new science of anthropology which was to be applied to the "primitive" and the "savage." In 1893, Freud and Breuer published their first paper on hysteria; they began to drag into daylight the unconscious elements in individual "civilised" man. But neither anthropology nor psychology has yet become more than an instrument in the hands of any individual, which he applies (according to his individuality) to primitives and abnormals.

By 1936 chaos was such that the latent elements were crystallised into a new compound. As so often happens, an idea was being worked out in many separate brains. A letter in THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION from Geoffrey Pyke, arising out of the Simpson crisis, explicitly mentioned the need for an "anthropology of our own people." A fortnight later a letter called attention to a group centred in London for the purpose of developing a science of Mass Observation, and this group effected contact with other individuals and with a group working in industrial Lancashire, which had so far concentrated on field work rather than formulation of theory. These interests are now united in the first, necessarily tentative, efforts of Mass Observation.

Mass Observation develops out of anthropology, psychology, and the sciences which study man—but it plans to work with a mass of observers. Already we have fifty observers at work on two sample problems. We are further working out a complete plan of campaign, which will be possible when we have not fifty but 5,000 observers. The following are a few examples of problems that will arise:

Behaviour of people at war memorials.
Shouts and gestures of motorists.
The aspidistra cult.
Anthropology of football pools.
Bathroom behaviour.
Beards, armpits, eyebrows.
Anti-semitism.
Distribution, diffusion and significance of the dirty joke.
Funerals and undertakers.
Female taboos about eating.
The private lives of midwives.

In these examples the anthropological angle is obvious, and the description is primarily of physical behaviour. Other inquiries involve mental phenomena which are unconscious or repressed, so that they can only be traced through mass-fantasy and symbolism as developed and exploited, for example, in the daily press. The outbreak of parturition-images in the press last October may have been seasonal, or may have been caused by some public stimulus: continuous watch on the shifting popular images can only be kept by a multitude of watchers. The observers will also provide the points from which can be plotted weather-maps of public feeling in a crisis.

The subject demands the minimum of prejudice, bias and assumption; the maximum of objectivity. It does not presuppose that there are any inexplicable things. Since it aims at collecting data before interpreting them, it must be allowed to doubt and re-examine the completeness of every existing idea about "humanity," while it cannot afford to neglect any of them.

Equally, all human types can and must assist in this work. The artist and the scientist, each compelled by historical necessity out of their artificial exclusiveness, are at last joining forces and turning back towards the mass from which they had detached themselves.

It does not set out in quest of truth or facts for their own sake, or for the sake of an intellectual minority, but aims at exposing them in simple terms to all observers, so that their environment may be understood, and thus constantly transformed. Whatever the political methods called upon to effect the transformation, the knowledge of what has to be transformed is indispensable. The foisting on the mass of ideals or ideas developed by men apart from it, irrespective of its capacities, causes mass misery, intellectual despair and an international shambles.

We hope shortly to produce a pamphlet outlining a programme of action. We welcome criticism and co-operation.

TOM HARRISSON
HUMPHREY JENNINGS
CHARLES MADGE.

THOSE NOUGHTS

SIR,—In an article in the *Observer* of January 3rd on the drainage of the Pontine Marshes, it is stated that "Mussolini hopes to have 900,000,000 acres of new land in cultivation when his plans are completed." As the whole area of Italy is only a little more than 120,000 square miles or 80,000,000 acres, Mussolini probably has a gentleman's agreement with Jugoslavia to drain the Adriatic.

This would give him approximately another 100,000,000 acres. Doubtless he would then turn his attention to the Mediterranean.

The Dutch must look to their polders. G. C. DOBBS

Hotel Bristol, Villars-s-ollon.

TOPICAL HISTORY

SIR,—Hypocritic's remarks on the topicality of the conversation between Napoleon and de Vincent draw me to point out how equally topical are the poems by Wordsworth, Byron, and even Scott on Napoleon's invasion of Spain.

Wordsworth has several poems that admirably fit the present occasion; the aptest is *Indignation of a High-minded Spaniard*, with its lines:

> . . . And we can brook the thought that by his hands
> Spain may be o'erpowered, and he possess,
> For his delight, a solemn wilderness,
> Where all the brave lie dead. But when of bands
> Which he will break for us, he dares to speak,
> Of benefits, and of a future day
> When our enlightened minds shall bless his sway,
> *Then*, the strained heart of fortitude proves weak:
> Our groans, our blushes, our pale cheeks declare
> That he has power t' inflict what we lack strength to bear.

And some of Byron's lines gain the same echoes:

> The unerring rifle of the Catalan;
> And Andalusian courser in the van;
> The torch to make a Moscow of Madrid. . . .
> . . . . Advance,
> And win—not Spain! But thine own freedom, France!

But when one reads these poems—or the magnificent call to conscience in Wordsworth's Tract on the Convention of Cintra—it is not merely the parallels that strike one's mind. It is also the lack of parallels. Where are our leading literary figures to give voice to these emotions now? They are all too busy salving their malaise with that slogan (so peculiarly infantile in its misconception of the whole basis of modern struggle) "Against both Fascism and Communism"—how should they have time for the life-and-death matters of humanity? JACK LINDSAY

Paignton.

SOCIALISM IN SWEDEN

SIR,—Your comment in your issue of Jan. 16th under the heading "Scandinavian Socialism at Work," moves me to write you again about Sweden, as I have done on a previous occasion. It is indeed a pity that Western Europe seems unable to learn from what you aptly term "Sweden's series of lessons in the correct management of crises under capitalism," yet it seems to me only fair to remember why this may be so.

For one thing, the Swedish Socialists have an absolute majority in the *Riksdag*, which the British Labour Party, even when they were in power, had not. Obviously this makes it much easier to get things done with a minimum of "democratic" shilly-shallying. But it is perhaps of greater interest to go back a few steps and consider why it was possible at all for the Socialists in Sweden to gain such a majority. No doubt a number of factors have contributed, but the most important of them seems to me the circumstance that industrialism on a large scale is a fairly recent growth in the Scandinavian countries, and the development of Socialism (of the moderate, pre-war, Social-Democrat type) has kept a pretty even pace with it. In other words, the Socialists of Sweden have never had a strongly entrenched capitalist organisation to contend with, and moreover, the Kreuger *débâcle* a few years ago, which took place at the height of a period of industrial expansion, dealt a considerable blow to Swedish capitalist complacency.

Add to this the fact that Sweden has not had a war for more that a hundred years (again, not because of any inherent Swedish virtues, but because the country's geographical position, comparative poverty and lack of imperial interests have kept it out of international entanglements), and that its peasants, who have had representation in the *Riksdag* since 1435, have never been serfs, and you have the advantages of a long period of peaceful development and a deeply rooted tradition of liberty.

At the same time, the fact that the Swedes are but one generation removed from the land (many a member of the middle classes—doctors, lawyers, journalists—has told me with pride "My father was a peasant") tends to make their very Socialism conservative, and they view anything approaching direct Socialist action with pious horror. But there are signs that the example of Russia has not failed to impress, willy-nilly, even in these quarters, and it will be interesting to see how the Swedes will behave at a time of serious political crisis.

Now it may seem as if I were trying to minimise their very real achievements, but as a matter of fact, I admire them very much, and am merely inquiring into their possible causes. For surely Swedish actions are no less "conditioned" than those of, say, Mr. Baldwin! PAULA WIKING

Boughton House, Green Lane,
Outwood, Surrey.

ROOSEVELT EXPERIMENT

SIR,—Your readers may be interested to learn that Mr. D. W. Brogan, M.A., fellow and tutor of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and author of *The American Political System*, has kindly agreed to lead a Study Tour to the United States to examine on the spot some of the more constructive aspects of the New Deal during the next University vacation.

We hope that a party of some twenty-five University teachers and students, journalists, and others especially interested in contemporary America, may be recruited for a Tour leaving England on the *Queen Mary* on March 17th and returning on the *Normandie* arriving April 19th. This party will be in America twenty-three days and will go as far South as the Tennessee Valley and as far West as Chicago. It will give particular attention to such aspects of the Roosevelt Experiment as the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Subsistence Homestead Projects, etc. It is also hoped to give particular attention to the labour situation which is now so much in the centre of American news.

It is anticipated that the group will have the opportunity of meeting a number of the high officials responsible for the administration of this Experiment and that they will also be able to meet for purposes of discussion a number of students and critics of the New Deal. It is also planned that discussions should be arranged with the representatives of capital, of the conservative American Federation of Labour, and the radical Committee of Industrial Organisation.

Unfortunately it is impossible to take the group over and back across 3,000 miles of ocean and over an itinerary of nearly 3,000 miles in the United States for less than £84 10s. We hope very much, however, that the novelty and value of such a first-hand examination of an experiment of such significance to a capitalist democracy like Britain will induce interested people to consider even such an expense. Further details and application forms can be obtained from this office. FRANK DARVALL

The English-Speaking Union, Director of Research
Dartmouth House, and Discussion.
37 Charles Street, Berkeley Square,
London, W.1.

KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

SIR,—In welcoming the Hogarth Press publication of Mr. Wells' lecture to the Royal Institution, *The Idea of a World Encyclopaedia*, "Hypocritic" remarks, "The knowledge of what would happen if you tried to extract billions from Germany existed; the knowledge of how to prevent . . . unemployment (etc.) . . . does probably really exist. But the people who actually have to deal with these problems—the newspaper proprietors, editors, politicians, statesmen—have not, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, the ghost of a glimmer of a suspicion that it exists." Innocent Hypocritic—and what a libel on editorial and ministerial private secretaries! Well enough do they know that accurate, comprehensive, objective, up-to-date information on almost any question you could name—be it international finance, scientific agriculture or the psychology of delinquency—is easily, rapidly and inexpensively obtainable through numerous organisations specialising in the investigation of such problems, not to mention the departmental committees, Royal Commissions and other official bodies whose admirable reports, covering almost every aspect of civilisation, lie unread on the shelves of H.M. Stationery Office. The presence of Mr. Keynes, with the British delegation to the Peace Conference, as principal Treasury representative did not deter our statesmen from their attempt to extract billions from Germany. A. E. E. R.

13 King's Bench Walk, Temple, E.C.4.

"NOT CLARET"

SIR,—In reply to the publication of *Not Claret*, let us give the B.B.C. its due. Far from frowning on another "vice," it actually encourages it!

I refer, of course, to gambling. There are stock exchange quotations, football results, racing results read so that we can copy down the names of the winners—and dare we suggest that there is speculation in fat stock prices?

In view of this, may we ask the B.B.C. to be at least consistent and give us a page of stable tips and hints on filling football coupons? Advertisements of bookmakers and pools would bring in a substantial revenue, too. If such advertising is forbidden, may we ask why?

L. GIBBES

5 Court Road, S.E.25.

Miscellany

THE APPETITE MAY SICKEN

A QUESTION was once set in an examination at Cambridge which asked in effect "What do you think of English Literature as a subject for study at a university?" No one I knew answered it honestly. We had been warned. Mr. F. L. Lucas, in his first lecture, hinted that when we were asked by examiners whether or not we thought Shakespeare sublime, it would be inadvisable to play the Cordelia. Actually, most of us were convinced Gonerils already, and could enthuse on Henryson or Blake with equal fervour and suitable quotations at a moment's notice. We kept our real enthusiasms to ourselves in fear of snubs. But some lecturers knew them instinctively, thought them deplorable and tried to extract them surgically with ridicule rather than let us grow out of them in our own time. Personally, I liked Housman, Browning, and Rupert Brooke more than I ever admitted; and I knew a man who worshipped Masefield and William Morris surreptitiously.

The lecturers who went very slowly so that we could take everything down were a bore; we knew their sources better than they suspected. The "stimulating" ones were a nuisance. Epigrams are useless stolen property. They are too easily recognisable by their owners. In any case the stimulators disagreed so heartily with each other that no wily examinee would risk admitting his allegiance on paper. In retrospect the work one did on "Life and Thought" seems the most satisfactory. People who talked into the air about aesthetics, psychology, Aristotle, and what have you were *safe*. And so were the historians who worried about wimples and the argument from design in the eighteenth century. But we thought them little use for tripos purposes. English Literature might be a good subject for post-graduate work, but for most undergraduates it meant that given excess of it the appetite would sicken and so die.

Stephen Potter has written a good, angry history of Eng. Lit.* His book jacket is covered with phrases like "killed in a tavern brawl," "occasional bursts of melody," "surely so prominent a scholar as Professor," "from Bandello." If these phrases mean anything to you, you have been touched by Eng. Lit. If you have ever written that Milton looked at the world through the spectacles of books, that the Lyrical Ballads marked the beginning of an epoch of imaginative writing, that Chaucer's humour, though sometimes broad, is more often tenderly whimsical, that Keats was capable of empathy with sparrows pecking at gravel, you have got the Mark of the Beast on you. If you agree with this statement, buy this book, fix your own experiences of Eng. Lit. in their context, and *discuss*.

Eng. Lit. is an experiment in education which went wrong. On the face of it, it would seem that the study of the best things written in English would be a valuable occupation for growing minds. Mr. Potter has diagnosed the real state of affairs and labelled it "Lit." Lit. is the pompous discussion of the unimportant aspects of important books by people who can't write. It manifests itself in the elegantly allusive third leader, in the Birthplace, the Biography, and the school edition. The Lit. vice is that of the *voyeur*—anyone can be a critic, but when it comes to creation "Stand aside for Genius." Geniuses are selected for special adoration, whose home life was all-too-human. It is a complicated muddle.

Mr. Potter has a fine museum of Lit. notes. For instance:

> That was to him
> Hyperion to a Satyr.

NOTE.—"Satyr refers, of course, to the cloven-footed *satyri* of Greek mythology." My own favourite "of course" note comes in an excellent edition of Julius Caesar:

> The angry spot doth glow on Caesar's brow.

NOTE.—"The angry spot would, of course, be red." Second favourite is the American who told us that "Iago's talents were not of a magnitude to make us feel that the world has lost much good in his death."

Mr. Potter's history of Lit. and outline of the evolution of the academic study of English clarifies a number of things which resentful victims of the present chaotic system had long suspected. "Lit. Ang," as he calls it, grew in dignity by strange means. Rhetoricians and grammarians began the business. Scotland, Anglicising herself, adopted it and examined the mechanics of writing while carefully leaving out the subject of it. The techniques of Shelley and Keats were compared when they dealt with the common subject of Birds. "Keats even surpasses Shelley . . . the happiness of the bird is not over-done in the same glaring style." Soon Saintsbury arrived and Lit. was far enough advanced for him to set as an examination question: "*Without* remarking that the thing became a trumpet in his hands, say something relevant about Milton's Sonnets. . . ." London followed Scotland, and after a long siege Oxford and later Cambridge fell. Churton Collins, Gosse, Skeat, and Raleigh were in their very various ways godfathers to the new subject. Mr. Potter has dealt so thoroughly with their characters, influences and difficulties that he must become a set book wherever Diplomas in Education are painfully awarded.

There is no philosophy of education in England, and of all the subjects in which pupils are prepared for the School Certificate, the Honours Degree, and life, English is the most haphazard and aimless. People do receive some education while undergoing Lit. Ang., but no credit for that is due to the syllabus or the system. It happens because English has attracted some teachers in schools and universities who could educate anybody with any material. Mr. Potter seems to think that although he suffered pedantry with violence in his time at Oxford from the duller parts of "the poet's poet," they do things much better in Cambridge now. But, alas, Eng. Lit. is very far from death. It still dithers between futile archaeology and pretentious blah. Would-be writers whose emotional development has been retarded by a public-school education are driven by the exam. bogy to ape the tastes of austere hypercritics and mature dilettantes. And the man who doesn't want to write and ought to have taken Icelandic, still leaves the Senate House murmuring "Thank Heaven we got that question on Wycliffe. Nothing else I could get my teeth into." The scientific teaching of taste in which Mr. Potter sets some faith—B.Sc. Lit.—produces in the pupil a combination of priggishness and ignorance which rivals that of the worst exponents of Lit. proper. Nor has it killed Lit. proper. The arch-scientist of Cambridge regularly communicates to hundreds of eager notebooks that Pipit was *obviously* the old nurse of Mr. T. S. Eliot. Donne and Hopkins have replaced Keats and Wordsworth as top poets before whom to make the ritual genuflections—such is progress. But it is only the eccentric teachers, that are writers themselves, who suggest that writing can be learnt only by writing, and that criticism is perhaps parasite on literature. Young poets pursue short cuts to maturity, skip the Swinburne phase and the Pomes Pennyeach phase, and cultivate their gardens by smothering them with up-to-date, highly recommended, pre-digested beliefs, traditions, and techniques. The Muse is still in chains. Anne Hathaway's Cottage rests secure on its concrete foundations.

* *The Muse in Chains. By Stephen Potter.* (*Cape*, 7s. 6d.)

Mr. Potter suggests that French Literature might be more suitable for undergraduate study than English. I thought so too, and after two years of English switched over to the Modern Languages Tripos. French Lit. was worse. French authors tend to take the regulations and opinions of their critics far more seriously than ours do, and when the question arose whether Genius was hampered by *les bienséances* it was necessary to be very judicious. The Lit. source books were duller and less accurate. Faguet is no fun to paraphrase and it didn't pay to use Brunetière. The gift of appreciating Jodelle, J. B. Rousseau, and Comte is not granted to everyone and the scarcity of good second-hand enthusiasm was serious at times. If someone writes a history of French Lit. he must festoon his jacket with: "C'est Vénus toute entière à sa proie attachée." And I hope he may find room for this note on Hugo and Juliette Drouet: "For fifty years she was not only his mistress, but his friend, nurse, secretary, amanuensis, and devoted slave. The duration and constancy of their mutual attachment may perhaps help us to judge it less severely."

FREDERICK LAWS

ENGLISH AND FRENCH

MESSRS. ROSENBERG AND HELFT are to be congratulated on organising at their fine new gallery (31 Bruton Street) an exhibition of what they correctly describe as "British Contemporary Art." Here is little that is not art, and art that is surprisingly British. Here are thirty-seven carefully chosen works by fifteen of our living compatriots. Everyone, probably, would wish to make a few additions and subtractions, but no serious critic could deny that ten of them at least are indispensable and that no one of whom the omission would have been scandalous has been omitted. For my part I regret the absence of Ethel Walker, Daintrey, Keith Baynes and Ivon Hitchens, while the inclusion of pictures by Gilbert Spencer and Henry Lamb seems to me unnecessary. But it would be worse than ungracious, it would be stupid, to find fault with a collection which is representative, well chosen and admirably presented. I only hope it will be transported whole to Paris.

Five-and-twenty years ago to confront English painting with French would have been ridiculous; the English painters, for the most part, were too obviously playing the roles of disciples. The masters were all on the other side of the channel; and, I am happy to say, most of them are there still. Bonnard, Vuillard, Maillol, Matisse and Picasso are still alive and still magisterial. I think, though such thoughts are rash and apt to be turned by time to derision, that nothing in this exhibition will ever be held to equal their work at its very best. But the English painters no longer have the air of pupils; and if, instead of comparing them with the masters of the modern movement, one compares them with the good Parisian painters of to-day, with Derain, Vlaminck, Utrillo, Segonzac, Friesz, Dufresne, Chirico, Berman, Briançon, Bérard, Mirò and Balthus—to pick a dozen of different ages—I think they hold their own. What is more, the comparison may be profitable.

All these English painters, with the exception of the Spencers, have learnt from the French, which is only another way of saying that they are alert and thorough. All, except Sickert who descends from Degas, and Steer who descends from the Impressionists and through the Impressionists from the French eighteenth century, are children or grandchildren of Cézanne. Augustus John in early days was deeply influenced by Picasso as well as by Puvis, from whom no doubt he got an understanding of Poussin. But Cézanne's influence is predominant, and the interesting thing is to see what these English men and women have made of it. Five-and-twenty years ago most of those who were already at work might have seemed frankly imitative. That disquieting epithet can be applied no longer. Each in his own way, and in widely different ways, has anglicised the French idiom. Take Duncan Grant, whom I consider the best English painter of his generation, if the father is Cézanne, the great-grandfather is Constable. What is more, the English poets are ancestors, too. Neither Grant, nor Steer for that matter, can sit down before a landscape and feel it unquestioningly, as Cézanne did, as a combination of forms and colours. Poetry keeps breaking in. There is always something idyllic about a successful English landscape. Some of Cézanne's landscapes are, in my opinion, amongst the greatest pictures in the world, but no one has ever thought of them as idylls. No one could wish so to think of them. But I have sometimes wished, looking at a ploughed field by that good artist Segonzac, that he would put a little less paint and a little more poetry into his pictures.

Look at the portraits in this exhibition, a fine array, by Sickert, John, Grant, Dobson, Vanessa Bell, Henry Lamb; they are as sympathetic as portraits by Izaak Walton and perhaps a little in the same manner. At any rate, there is more of Gainsborough and Lawrence about them than of Cézanne and Ingres. The only artist here who treats his sitter—and she happens to be his wife—quite objectively, quite unpoetically, is Gertler, and he is not of English descent. I am not suggesting that his is the worse way. In the art of Nash and Wadsworth, who represent later developments of modern painting, this "mere Englishness" is less apparent. Yet in his choice of colours and use of paint Nash is guided, I think, a good deal by the native tradition; while the two pictures by Wadsworth are not sufficiently personal to tell us much about his temperament. Or is it that I have failed to understand what Wadsworth is driving at in his *Regalia*? As I see it, he has set himself to make a realistic still-life, and instead of representing fruit and flowers has portrayed an arrangement of scientific instruments. The personal choice is not in the expression but in the subject, and that is not where it should be.

The English are generally supposed to have a talent for decoration, and the opinion is, on the whole, borne out by what we see here; though of course a mixed show is no place for large decorative pieces. Elsewhere several of these artists have made manifest a gift for creating a sequence of rapid and fluent forms which, without ever sinking to emptiness, avoid that fatal vice in decoration, the vice of being over-charged. The painter who, when asked to decorate, attempts to create a row of elaborated still-lifes and landscapes or a series of psychological studies, should never be asked to decorate again. The English, when they can be induced to let themselves go, to give rein to their fancy, and yet not to be too slovenly, are at their best in decoration. Their heads seem to be full of gay and faintly literary notions which lend themselves well to rapid and fluent expression. When they refuse to let themselves go, they become stuck and oily in a way of which Frenchmen of equal talents, with their workmanlike training and sense of the job in hand, would never be guilty. Friesz, one of the best living craftsmen in this sort, whose cartoons for the Gobelins manufactory we are to see in this year's Paris exhibition, is incapable of producing decoration that is not decorative; but his output does sometimes become dismally empty, for the simple reason, as I believe, that he is gravelled for lack of matter. That would be unlikely to happen to an English artist of his eminence. The happiest English decorations—e.g., John's cartoons in the Tate or Duncan Grant's which should have enlivened the *Queen Mary*—are apt to make one think of Elizabethan poetry, of that golden age when a poet could treat a classical theme seriously, because he was an artist, and whimsically because he was no pedant. French painters, it seems, rarely need to eke out their decoration with poetical fancy, though in the work of Bonnard, Dufresne and Derain you will find plenty. I forbear to offer an explanation.

In this admirable and representative exhibition we can, then, if we choose, discover those characteristics which are said to distinguish English painting. Here is the free, rich, delicious brushwork of Gainsborough and Constable; here is that poetical sense of the subject which we all love in Constable and Crome, and which in Turner makes me queasy; here, in the work of Gilbert Spencer, is a smack of that undigested literature which turns only too easily to British anecdote and allegory; and here and there is a suspicion of amateurishness

which becomes more than a suspicion only by comparison with the French. We shall never be so austere, so intellectual or so workmanlike as they are, and I see very little use in trying—especially as we seem generally to lose some of our native quality in the attempt. Apparently the natural development of a modern English artist is to learn from France till he can learn no more and then to go back to Gainsborough and Constable. For my part, I am thankful if he does not go back to the Pre-Raphaelites and Blake. Far from complaining, I would have him accept cheerfully the fact, since fact it seems to be, that not only Gainsborough and Constable are his ancestors, but Wordsworth, Milton, Marlowe and Shakespeare as well. French painting stands firm on its own feet, owing nothing to Baudelaire or Hugo, or Racine even, or Ronsard. But English poetry is the greatest in the world, and the painters must pay for it.

CLIVE BELL

IMPRESSIONS OF VALENCIA

THE pigeons fly about the square in brilliant sunshine, warm as a fine English May. In the centre of the square, surrounded all day long by crowds and surmounted by a rifle and fixed bayonet, 15ft. high, is an enormous map of the Civil War, rather prettily illustrated after the manner of railway posters urging one to visit Lovely Lakeland or Sunny Devon. Badajoz is depicted by a firing-party; a hanged man represents Huelva; a doll's train and lorry are heading for Madrid; at Seville Quiepo el Llano is frozen in an eternal broadcast. The General seems to be the Little Willie of the war; in a neighbouring shop window a strip of comic woodcuts shows his rake's progress from a perverse childhood to a miserable and well-merited end.

Altogether it is a great time for the poster artist and there are some very good ones. Cramped in a little grey boat the Burgos Junta, dapper Franco and his bald German adviser, a cardinal and two ferocious Moors are busy hanging Spain; a green Fascist centipede is caught in the fanged trap of Madrid; in photomontage a bombed baby lies couchant upon a field of aeroplanes.

To-day a paragraph in the daily papers announces that since there have been incidents at the entrances to cabarets, these will in future be closed at nine p.m. Long streamers on the public buildings appeal for unity, determination and discipline. Three children, with large brown eyes like some kind of very rich sweet, are playing trains round the fountain. On one of the Ministries a huge black arrow draws attention to the fact that the front at Teruel is only 150 km. away. This is the Spain for which charming young English aviators have assured us that the best would be a military dictatorship backed by a foreign Power.

Since the Government moved here the hotels are crammed to bursting with officials, soldiers and journalists. There are porters at the station and a few horse-cabs, but no taxis, in order to save petrol. Food is plentiful, indeed an hotel lunch is heavier than one could wish. There is a bull-fight in aid of the hospitals; there is a variety show where an emaciated-looking tap-dancer does an extremely sinister dance of the machine-guns. The foreign correspondents come in for their dinner, conspicuous as actresses.

And everywhere there are the people. They are here in corduroy breeches with pistols on their hip, in uniform, in civilian suits and berets. They are here, sleeping in the hotels, eating in the restaurants, in the cafés drinking and having their shoes cleaned. They are here, driving fast cars on business, running the trains and the trams, keeping the streets clean, doing all those things that the gentry cannot believe will be properly done unless they are there to keep an eye on them. This is the bloodthirsty and unshaven Anarchy of the bourgeois cartoon, the end of civilisation from which Hitler has sworn to deliver Europe.

For a revolution is really taking place, not an odd shuffle or two in cabinet appointments. In the last six months these people have been learning what it is to inherit their own country, and once a man has tasted freedom he will not lightly give it up; freedom to choose for himself and to organise his life, freedom not to depend for good fortune on a clever and outrageous piece of overcharging or a windfall of drunken charity. That is why, only eight hours away at the gates of Madrid where this wish to live has no possible alternative expression than the power to kill, General Franco has already lost two professional armies and is in the process of losing a third.

W. H. AUDEN

IS OPERA POPULAR?

THE season of opera which is just concluding at Covent Garden has been in many respects admirable and has deserved a much greater measure of support than it has received from the public. Most theatres have been doing badly owing to the influenza epidemic, but the fact is that the public for opera in this country is rather a special one. It is worth remarking that all the cheaper seats at Covent Garden have been well filled, although for the *Salome* performances the cheapest seats, which are in the gallery, cost five shillings, which was double the usual price. It is the stall public which has failed to respond adequately, and this difference in the popularity of opera among the public which can pay easily fifteen shillings for a seat and that which with difficulty can pay half a crown is very marked. It is visible even at Sadler's Wells, where the cheaper seats are usually crowded out. In fact it may be said that if the wealthy section of the London public supported music and opera relatively as enthusiastically as the half-crown or three-shilling public, Covent Garden would flourish financially. There is a still larger public of potential opera-lovers who cannot afford to pay even half a crown for a seat. The success, in spite of the regular opera at Sadler's Wells, of the Carl Rosa company

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at the People's Palace recently is a proof of this, and I believe that Sunday orchestral concerts in this district at the People's Palace or at Sadler's Wells and the "Old Vic" would be very successful, although it is doubtful if they could be made to pay their way owing to the heavy expense an orchestra involves.

But when one considers the enormous population of London it is impossible not to feel bitterly disappointed at the totally inadequate support of this excellent season of opera at Covent Garden, for which Sir Thomas Beecham had collected really good singers from all over Europe, including Great Britain. It is not in the least an exaggeration to say that, apart from *Hamlet* at the "Old Vic" and the ballet at Sadler's Wells, there has not been a single theatrical entertainment in London of anywhere near the same value as that at Covent Garden during the past few weeks. And it is not as if the operas given were all difficult to enjoy or made great demands upon the audience's musical understanding. Such works as *Hansel and Gretel* and *Die Fledermaus* (sung in English, too, be it noted !) are first-class popular entertainments. I am positively certain that at no farce or comedy or comic film in London during the past year has there been anything as amusing as the last act of *Die Fledermaus*, for example ; in which, I may also remark, the acting of Mr. Percy Heming and Mr. Ralph Roberts would have made the fortune of a musical comedy or revue.

It is certainly not the fault of Sir Thomas Beecham and his colleagues that Covent Garden has not been sold out every night since Christmas, and it is not due to any lack of quality or variety in the operas performed and, finally, it is certainly not due to any fundamental improvement in public taste which makes opera unsuitable or unacceptable or uninteresting to the present age. On the contrary, I am convinced that opera has its future before it. No, the explanation for the failure of the wealthy London public to support Covent Garden may be found elsewhere. It is to be found in the decline and almost disappearance of social culture in this country among the rich. In the past the wealthy classes in every European country had a culture and a sense of responsibility. To-day they have none, and they are more frivolous and less cultured than the masses. Serious musicians tell me that they have this same experience everywhere ; that good music empties the stalls and packs the galleries and areas where the warmest enthusiasm prevails.

If one wants to see what the wealthy public is doing, one has only to look at the weekly illustrated papers and to read the accounts of the first-night audiences at films. People like the late Arthur Balfour—who was a relic of a more civilised society—would not have been seen dead in a cinema. But to-day the rich, who have no culture, no responsibility, no dignity, no discrimination, but are a mere colourless, characterless mob of pleasure-seekers with the tastes of the gutter, are to be found of their own choice driving up in their motor cars to all the cinemas in the country, to which the masses are compelled to go only because there is no other entertainment offered to them at the price.

And, of course, that parasite of the rich, the paragraphing journalist, begins at once his task of flattering the low tastes of his masters, and pretending that these films which they frequent are a new form of art. I am no enemy of the cinema. The film is, like printing, an invention which has enabled drama and music to be multiplied and distributed a thousandfold. Printing was not a new art-form, it was merely a new method of distributing literature, and its value consists not in itself but in what is distributed. Printing does not make newspapers better reading than mediaeval manuscripts, it only makes them more accessible and easier to read. Film-photography is a similar process ; it is not and never can be a form of art. Actors have got to learn to act (or so one would suppose) before they can be filmed, and even Walt Disney has to draw—and very poor, in my opinion, even as a comic caricaturist, his drawings are.

By all means let the cinema flourish, but a society without culture or discrimination, which has reduced all its pleasures to a lowest cinema denominator, is intellectually in a bad way. And bad habits can dominate one's life. Going to hear opera and music, like reading, has to become a habit, formed when one is young ; otherwise one will never again have the mental energy for it. If the young are not being taken to the opera to-day they will, with rare exceptions, not be capable of enjoying it when they are older. Thousands of young women are presented by their parents at Court, but how many nowadays are presented to the opera ?

W. J. TURNER

PLAYS AND PICTURES

"Ernte," at the Academy

As all cinemagoers know, a film in which there are skies and pigs is idyllic. And so is *Ernte*. For story it has indeed the slenderest thread—"Kind Hearts are more than Coronets" would have made in many ways a more explanatory title. The story of a young aristocrat's career as peasant farmer is to quite a large extent devoted to showing the unkindness of the coronets. "Oh the gentry, they can shoot and ride and dance," says the subtitle on behalf of Fraülein Wessely, and so they do, in the most brutal, heartless and unsympathetic fashion ever seen on any screen. For Fraülein Wessely's performance no praise can be too high, she looks a peasant, she feeds the pigs with conviction and rubs the horses down with fire. She is wistful with dignity, and indignant with humour. And Attila von Horbige, who plays the young man, is as thoroughly the Hussar turned yeoman. That this is sentimental stuff no one will deny, but it is none the less moving. *Ernte* is one of those rare films in which the actors and technicians transcend the literal aspects of their business. It is very beautiful, and Hollywood itself could not be more efficient, or come within miles of these lovely Styrian exteriors.

"Fear," at the Curzon

Fear is quite simply a melodrama—love and torment in rich Parisian professional circles. Its finish is its only outstanding quality—a sort of polish that glosses over psychological ineptitudes which would make an English film on the same lines look silly. We cannot know, for instance, if the makers of the film meant M. Charles Vanel (whose bitterly hurt and twisted mouth is once more in use to depict the agonies of jealousy) to appear quite such a monster of cruelty as he does, or whether Mdlle. Gaby Morlay, who is his chic Parisian wife, really intended there to be such an undercurrent of real hatred in her jokingly loving "Je te déteste" or to show her motives for clinging to her husband as quite so frankly mercenary. But these are objections raised only after the lights have gone up. As entertainment *Fear* is good enough to hold one's attention and to make one feel some concern for the characters—and that is as good as this kind of thing can be.

French Masters at the National Gallery

A room in the National Gallery has been given exclusively to the Old Masters of the French nineteenth century. Hanging within a wall's thickness of Poussin and Claude, Degas and Cézanne, Seurat, Manet and Renoir look well and far more comfortable than they did when they were round the corner from the Chantrey Bequest. The Roger Fry memorial picture, which is on public exhibition for the first time, is a most delicate and lovely Sisley and a valuable addition to the National Gallery, though so demure a picture might seem less appropriate than a Matisse, for instance, to commemorate the champion of Post-Impressionism. The gem of the Gulbenkian loan (also being seen for the first time) is a lovely little Degas—portrait of an artist in his studio. There are also (in the Gulbenkian loan) two Monets and three Corots, two of which are large but not exciting, and the third a Venetian sketch, and an early Manet in the manner but not the mood of Chardin. The room as a whole looks magnificent, it is remarkably well hung—particularly the wall where three large Degas hang side by side—and any complaint against the arrangement must sound ungrateful, but it does seem a pity that any space should be taken up by that "frozy" Fantin-Latour.

Drawings by Children at Messrs. Heal, 196 Tottenham Court Road

Now that child-like imagination and native simplicity are counted among the most valuable qualities an artist can have, the mastery

of tiny tots is axiomatic. If there are to be comparisons between their masterworks, there can be little doubt, I think, that the best (in this country at least) come from the little groups working in schools which have been influenced by Miss Richardson. To collect so much work, of such a high standard as is to be seen at Messrs. Heal's gallery, Miss Richardson must have exercised a selective ability that is in itself an art. But though this exhibition may be taken to represent only the cream of youthful achievement in the graphic arts, there is enough startling ability, enough lucid self-expression to make the professional exponents of wide-eyed innocence in painting feel decidedly uncomfortable about the amateur competition. It is perhaps this very lucidity that makes a visit to this exhibition almost as exhausting an experience as man can have. One spectator who has been staggered by Tom Tottman's *Training Horses*, bowled over by Mary Ford's *Tiger Drinking* (and how Dufresne would envy this), and flattened out by the brilliance of Sarah Bland's *Theatre by Night*, has little left to give when he is confronted with the Matisse-like harmonies of Pat Blyth's family scene or the tragic intensity of Alice Koraine's *Guy Fawkes*—and there are hundreds of others.

Ian Fairweather at the Redfern Gallery

Mr. Fairweather's new paintings are, if possible, more exquisite than ever before. The mauves and chinese oranges crumble into one another, the exquisite greys and whites save them from becoming gaudy. Whether it is the foredeck of a tramp steamer or the hill of temples at Hang Chow, the effect is much the same, a powdery butterfly scale beauty, like old brocade or the most expensive of Paisley patterned silks. With Mr. Fairweather the subjects are only starting points for decoration, for excursions into colours and textures; excursions, too, that, if everything had its deserts, should end sitting pretty in elegantly bleached modern interiors. A charming talent which threatens to become a trick.

THE COMING WEEK

FRIDAY, January 29th—

Supper Meeting, National Trade Union Club, 24 New Oxford Street, 7.30. Hugh Gosschalk (member of the International Student Delegation to Spain) on what he saw. (Tickets, 1*s*. 3*d*.).

SATURDAY, January 30th—

Robert Mayer Concert for Children, Central Hall, Westminster, 11.

SUNDAY, January 31st—

J. P. Gilmour on "Thomas Paine" (Bi-centenary), Conway Hall, 11.

Film Society, New Gallery, 2.30.

Prof. J. C. Flugel on "Examinations in the Light of History and Recent Criticism," 153 Finchley Road, N.W., 6.15.

Griller String Quartet, Working Men's College, Crowndale Road, 6.30.

Medical Aid for Spain Meeting. Speeches by J. Langdon-Davies, Sylvia Pankhurst, Prof. P. M. S. Blackett and others, Large Public Hall, Croydon, 8. (Tickets, 3*d*.).

J. F. Horrabin on "The New Unity Campaign," Willoughby Hall, Willoughby Road, N.W.3., 8.

MONDAY, February 1st—

S.C.R. "The Position of Women in the U.S.S.R. Speeches by Mrs. Amabel Williams-Ellis, and Mrs. Margaret Cole, Conway Hall, 8.15.

TUESDAY, February 2nd—

Senora Margarita Comas on "The New Spain," Friends House, Euston Road, 1.20.

Debate: "That the Weight of Evidence is Against the Theory of Organic Evolution." Affirmative: D. Dewar. Negative: J. McCabe, Conway Hall, 7. (Tickets, 1*s*.).

Arnold Goldsbrough Concert, Queen Mary Hall, Great Russell Street, 8.30. (Tickets, 5*s*. and 3*s*.).

"Home and Beauty," Adelphi Theatre.

WEDNESDAY, February 3rd—

Exhibition of British Architecture 1937. Sir Edwin Cooper on "Municipal Buildings," Royal Academy Lecture Room, 3.

Stephen Spender on "Writers in a Changing World," National Trade Union Club, 24 New Oxford Street, 8.

People's Front Open Meeting. National Trade Union Club, New Oxford Street, 8.15.

Léner Quartet: Beethoven Recital, Grotrian Hall, 8.30.

"L'Invitation au Voyage," Gate Theatre.

"The Orchard Walls," St. James's Theatre.

THURSDAY, February 4th—

F.P.S.I. Norman Haire on "Contraceptive Technique," Conway Hall, 8.

Meeting on Spain. Speeches by Prof. J. B. S. Haldane, Ernie Brown (President S.S.U.) and others, Grand Hall, Acton Baths, Acton, W.3, 8.

"Because We Must," Wyndham's Theatre.

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Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

I WISH I had known Ralph Fox, who was killed a few weeks ago fighting in defence of Madrid, for he must have been an exceptionally charming and intelligent man with a real love of English literature. His critical essay, *The Novel and the People* (Lawrence and Wishart, 5s.), shows how strong and how sincere this love was, and it reveals also the peculiar freshness and charm which accompanies strong conviction. Fox was, of course, a Communist, and his view of the English novel will probably be accepted by Communists as the official doctrine on the subject; and though I profoundly disagree with his estimate of the English novel, I do not think it is any more unreasonable than the arbitrary hierarchies and orders of precedence established among great writers by the Professors of English Literature which have just been so brilliantly analysed by Stephen Potter in *The Muse in Chains*. The novelists are here in chains, like so many galley-slaves. If they don't tug at the oars the whip whistles, though Ralph Fox often finds surprising reasons for not being too severe. For example, he says it is inept of me to point out Fielding's brutality in his treatment of Molly Segrim, and reminds me that the "brutal" Fielding was the first man to draw up a scheme for a civilised police force! Surely the police force was to protect the property of the bourgeoisie and its formation was just an example of the organisation of a capitalist society against the workers.

* * *

The first important point he raises is this:

> Can a Novelist remain indifferent to the problems of the world in which he lives? Can he shut his ears to the clamour of preparing war, his eyes to the state of his country . . . they live in a time in which nothing less than the fate of humanity is being decided.

The answer to this cannot be a moral judgment: it is a question of fact, not of ethics. The fate of humanity is decided afresh by every generation. If a novelist was capable of shutting his eyes to the Industrial Revolution, perhaps he is capable of shutting his eyes to what is going on now, though he may not know what is going on however widely he keeps them open. And it seems to me a fact that quite important and valuable novelists can live in extremely restricted worlds, just as quite important painters may confine themselves to painting naked women or cows standing in ponds. No doubt Henry James, whom Ralph Fox only mentions with a sneer, is a limited novelist, deaf to the thunder and blind to the lightning of the approaching storm, but on that account surely he is better qualified, and not worse, to fathom the mercenary and snobbish motives of the party gathered behind closed curtains round the teacups and the muffineer. Are *Moby Dick* or *Manon Lescaut* worse because one can read them for their own sakes and not as comments on society, just as one reads *Daphnis and Chloe* without bothering one's head about the unfortunate class differences between rich citizens of Mitylene and the goat-herds who bring up their children?

* * *

But the Communist is positively sentimental about the distant past. Ralph Fox quotes from Marx and Engels:

> The bourgeoisie wherever it has got the upper hand has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties which bound man to his "natural superiors" and has left no other bond between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash-pay-out."

The relations of the villein to his feudal lord may not have looked as idyllic to John Ball as they did to Marx. The progressive degradation of cash payments might have had its appeal at the time of the Peasants' Revolt, but for the Communist the nineteenth century has to be loaded with the blame of the whole history of mankind. And it has to bear the blame for the feebleness of the novel.

> World literature is a weakling child, prevented from natural growth by the very conditions of capitalist production which gave it birth. Race and national hatreds, class enmity, the forcible prevention of the national development of weak nations by strong, even sex bias and antagonism, the opposition between town and country, the ever-widening division between mental and physical labour . . . all these things, arising from the contradictions of capitalist society, are fetters on the growth of a world literature.

World literature is, I suppose, no more than the sum of literature written in different languages in different parts of the world. But is it true that the sufferings of mankind are fetters on his powers of self-expression? Are they not rather a spur? Is not the greatest literature often a cry of agony or a savage indictment of injustice? Ralph Fox says himself:

> The three greatest books of the age were all such cries of suffering. *Wuthering Heights*, *Jude the Obscure*, and *The Way of All Flesh*, were the manifestoes of English genius that a full human life in a capitalist society was impossible of attainment.

Personally, I don't see much capitalist society about *Wuthering Heights*, but do we feel these novels are feeble because of the social conditions which called them forth? Certainly the books written in a society lacking these evils would be unimaginably different. But if, for the sake of argument, we grant that these evils are fetters, we come on a curious contradiction, since those who slip their handcuffs and concern themselves with the permanent conditions of human life, which no social revolutions can alter, are those for whom Ralph Fox feels most contempt, or whom he ignores, because they do not concern themselves with the class struggle.

* * *

One may be born a proletarian and have genius, but one cannot be a "proletarian writer," unless one holds the correct political theory. D. H. Lawrence doesn't fit: he had theories of his own. So Fox says: "Lawrence has little claim to be considered a novelist at all." His significance is that "he is the last writer to appreciate English country and the beauty of the English earth." I should have thought Lawrence appreciated a good deal more of the surface of the globe than that round Nottingham—and as for his being the *last* to do so, what of H. E. Bates, one of the best novelists now writing, who simply is not mentioned? He writes with first-hand knowledge of factory workers in little towns against the background of the English country, of poachers and barmaids and servant girls. But he deals with reality and ignores political theory, and for Ralph Fox there was no reality outside the Marxian interpretation. I can sympathise with his indictment of Dickens for sentimentalising, and of Scott for idealising. But is it true to say: "It had become impossible for the novelist to see people truly. Even Jane Austen, who almost succeeded, surrenders with every character"? I disagree. I think that if she had believed she was living in an age of "progressive degradation" she would have been sentimental and her realistic picture of the world she knew would have suffered.

> One cannot, however, think passionately even about English country and the English earth if one is unable to see that this earth is not free, that the heritage of every Englishman is being wantonly deformed and destroyed by a tiny group of ignorant and conscienceless landlords.

I think there is no difference in *kind* between the Communist view and the Christian standpoint that our lives here are a preparation for Heaven or Hell. A great artist can be a Communist just as he can be a Christian. Such a faith may even help him. But a critic is ruined by such beliefs. Finally, I should like to say that the opposite of Flaubert's hated bourgeois is not a workman or a Communist but an artist. Communists are often bourgeois in Flaubert's sense. Ralph Fox's book, though narrow, is a proof that they are not always so. His conception of a great novel on the subject of the Reichstag fire shows he was a true artist. But I wonder how this book will read in a hundred years, when the State capitalism of Communism is seen as an example of "progressive degradation" and Marx is as exploded a guide as the Utilitarians are now?

DAVID GARNETT

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HAMISH HAMILTON : PUBLISHER

NEW NOVELS

Pie in the Sky. By ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL. *Cape.* 8*s.* 6*d.*
The Blue Bed. By GLYN JONES. *Cape.* 7*s.* 6*d.*
Delicate Monster. By STORM JAMESON. *Nicholson and Watson.* 5*s.*
There Ain't No Justice. By JAMES CURTIS. *Cape.* 7*s.* 6*d.*
Only Pain is Real. By ROBERT WESTERBY. *Barker.* 7*s.* 6*d.*
Eve's Doctor. By SIGNE TOKSVIG. *Faber.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

Mr. Arthur Calder-Marshall has already taken his place among our most interesting younger novelists. He is an original writer; but his originality is not of the kind that appeals to the eye rather than to the intelligence—a matter of typographical eccentricities and primitive grammatical short-cuts; nor does he rely upon a strained and artificial intensity which drives home every tintack with sledge-hammer blows. *About Levy* was a remarkable first effort. Like many first books, it was not completely successful; but, unlike the majority of 'prentice novels, it performed the extremely useful service of establishing an immediate contact between Mr. Calder-Marshall and the critical reading public; for here, we felt, was a novelist who both had something to say and was sufficiently sensitive to realise that the importance of what he had to say could only emerge through the manner in which, as a literary artist, he elected to say it. *Dead Centre* and *At Sea* have strengthened the bond. We can be quite sure that anything Mr. Calder-Marshall writes will be worth reading; and, of the six novels under review, one does not hesitate to pick out *Pie in the Sky* as the freshest, briskest and best written. Yet, from another point of view, it marks a setback. Whereas *At Sea* had the advantage of a simple centralised theme, the scope of his new novel is so large, and the material so overwhelmingly abundant, that the impression it leaves behind is somewhat diffuse, while the novelist's method, as he springs from personage to personage and episode to episode, trying to pull them together into the same pre-determined literary pattern, becomes sprawling and slightly chaotic towards the end. Let us admit, however, that the fault is at least as much in Mr. Calder-Marshall's material as in the treatment he has adopted. He has attempted to give us a broad comprehensive picture of certain aspects of contemporary English life; and if there is a single characteristic that contemporary life does not possess, it is the element of congruity and continuity that is reflected in small, well-constructed, neatly finished works of imaginative literature from which the sense of confusion is entirely absent. Confusion is Mr. Marshall's background—confusion of standards and ideas, confusion of classes and types, the economic confusion which makes strange political associates and, now and then, alas, stranger bedfellows. It would be difficult to decide where the story *begins*. Indeed, there is no story. The narrative develops to a quick haphazard measure, revealing the odd links that unite incongruous human beings, the odd chances that separate lovers and friends apparently sympathetic, the psychological stresses and strains of wealth and poverty. Carder Yorke, a vulgar, good-natured, business man, who lives in the North of England, is comparatively well off; Bernard, who assists him in the family business, has none of his father's *bonhomie* and a streak of uncommonly spiteful puritanism; the second son, Fenner, though by no means puritanical, works in London and inhabits that stimulating *milieu* where everyone is *almost* a Communist but no one, apart from a number of exceptionally earnest and self-abnegatory spirits, would quite dare to commit financial *hara-kiri*.

Beneath this level, Mr. Calder-Marshall explores the abyss. He penetrates the *bas-fonds* of respectable bewildered misery, where unemployed men and their wives, who sweat over piles of washing in steamy kitchens, look forward with horror to the operation of the Means Test, and describes the existence of a middle-aged foreman who goes on the road rather than continue to live on the dole. He introduces us to Communist meetings, and he reproduces the conversation and atmosphere of the informal gatherings by which those meetings are followed. As a delineator of episodes, Mr. Calder-Marshall is extraordinarily adroit; and it is only when he comes to work individual episodes into some common scheme that his resource and ingenuity show signs of failing. *Pie in the Sky* is an interesting book, the product of an interesting and individual brain; but it is not a satisfactory novel, for the narrative is prolific of loose ends, and a reader finishes the book not with one, but with a very large number of unresolved queries. What will happen to Fenner—to Caroline—to Wynne—to that lecherous, engaging old opportunist, Carder Yorke—to Alexey Deuteropopoff (the story's weakest character), who from keeping a Communist café graduates to the management of a Capitalist night-club? The novelist finds it impossible to look ahead. He deserts us, as he has discovered us, among moving shadows.

Pie in the Sky is a fragmentary yet accomplished book. *The Blue Bed*, on the other hand, though it displays unusual promise, is the work of an author whose utterance, like that of an adolescent, now attains to a deep authoritative note, now shrills up into a sharp treble, now descends to a hoarse and grumbling undertone. I should advise students of modern fiction to look out for Mr. Glyn Jones's next production; but I am not sure that I should recommend them to try his present collection of short stories. Mr. Jones is a Communist and a Welshman, and has a mystical tendency inherited from both sides. His first episode, *I Was Born in the Ystrad Valley*, is a mixture of propaganda, argument and lyrical writing, pitched in the least tolerable vein of D. H. Lawrence. The narrative deals with a Communist revolt in a Welsh industrial district; and Mr. Jones alternately illuminates his subject with some vivid straightforward paragraph and obscures it in a fog of angry rhetoric. If only (one laments) Mr. Jones would realise that the best stories are the stories that tell themselves—the most effective propaganda the type of propaganda that needs no underlining! But it is uncharitable to quarrel with a book that is obviously the book of a young man, and that seems to indicate that the young man is developing rapidly. At present, he is too thorough a Communist to depend on art, but too good an artist to make a convincing political preacher.

Thirdly, a rousing dose of feminine malice. It takes a woman to be thoroughly horrid about a woman; for a man, however antagonistic, is usually accessible to feminine humbug; and the most damaging portraits of female sitters have either been composed by members of their own sex or by men who (like Swift) have had special safeguards. *Delicate Monster* is a sketch of one exceedingly nasty woman drawn by her (it must be admitted) almost equally unpleasing friend. Here is the primitive antithesis of plain and pretty. Here is the savage, though often unspoken, enmity that exists between the poor cat i' the adage and the pampered fireside favourite who skims the cream from every saucer, who stays out as late as she pleases, makes the evening hideous with dissolute and down-at-heel toms from all over the neighbourhood, yet somehow is always let in at the front door. Both Fanny and Victoria had obscure beginnings. But, while Fanny was destined to lose the husband on whom she doted, and to end her life criticising and placing novels, Victoria made a career for herself as a successful actress and secured husbands and lovers in monotonous variety. Fanny loathed Victoria yet envied her triumphs. Particularly was she envious of Victoria's charm, at the moment when Victoria, quite effortlessly and casually and without any real desire, managed to lure Fanny's husband into bed. There follows an appalling description of physical jealousy at its most painful and most undignified. It is a pity that Miss Storm Jameson should have wedged a long literary disquisition—which has particular reference to novelists and novel-reviewers—right into the middle of her book. Otherwise, *Delicate Monster* is as neat as it is savage.

Amateurs of the boxing ring will find a great deal to interest them in *There Ain't No Justice* by Mr. James Curtis and *Only Pain is Real* by Mr. Robert Westerby. The former is the work of a novelist whose first book, *The Gilt Kid*, has already shown that he possesses considerable, though as yet rather undeveloped, talent; while the second is the product of an American writer, now acclaimed by his English publishers as the author of the "best boxing story we have read since *The Iron Man*." Actually, a comparison with Mr. Burnett's story is calculated to show up all the shortcomings of *Only Pain is Real*. Mr. Burnett is a realist, with certain romantic trimmings; Mr. Westerby a romantic who makes certain concessions to popular realism. The tale itself is readable; but Mr. Westerby is not sufficiently on his guard; and then a single cliché sends him down for the count. Thus, we read that Van—the boxer-hero, like all boxers in fiction extremely simple-minded and frequently ill-used—sat "tensely behind the wheel" and drove "the big car hurtling down the road. With whistling tyres, it swept round curves, on and on." And again: "the big car lurched round a bend with screaming tyres . . . slid wildly round a curve, another, and stopped with a jerk." *There Ain't No Justice* is just as vivacious and rather more cynical; but, like Van Logan's big car, it stops abruptly.

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Mr. James Curtis' narrative career is violent and brief. The novelist skids from episode to episode, finally pulling up when the protagonist, who has laid bets on his own defeat, wins in spite of himself and finishes the day with a calamitous loss of no less than seventeen pounds. *Eve's Doctor* is a more leisurely production. Miss Signe Toksvig has previously published a Life of Hans Andersen; and strong-stomached readers, who don't mind blood or carefully detailed accounts of complicated obstetrical operations, may try this painstaking narrative of the love affair of an attractive Irish gynaecologist and his charming, slightly too-repressed patient. The account of a baptism *in utero* in Chapter Twenty-three is as curious and quite as grisly as the paragraphs devoted by the Goncourts to a Caesarian *accouchement*. Strange are the scraps of information that one picks up while reviewing modern novels!

PETER QUENNELL

THE HUMANE TRAVELLER

Have You Anything to Declare? A Note Book with Commentaries. By MAURICE BARING. *Heinemann.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

The luggage of a lifetime, this may be; but it cannot be docketed with one of those handy labels favoured by up-and-coming reviewers. "Anthology" does not fit, and "analecta" is pedantic; "commonplace book" suggests merely the copyist, and nobody would welcome "spicilegium." All one can do is to describe, illustrate, and commend. And the description is best left to Mr. Baring—after all, the simile, a fruitful one, is his:

> I dreamed once [he says] that, like Clarence, I had "pass'd the melancholy flood, with that grim Ferryman that poets write of," and that when we reached the other side there was a Customs House and an official who had inscribed in golden letters on his cap *Chemins de fer de l'Enfer*, who said to me, "Have you anything to declare?" And he handed me a printed list on which, instead of wine, spirits, tobacco, silk, lace, etc., there was printed Sanskrit, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, German, Spanish, Scandinavian, Chinese, Arabic and Persian, and it was explained to me that this list referred to the literary baggage I had travelled with during my life, and that I need only declare those things of which I had a permanent record either in my memory or in written note-books. There, sure enough, on the counter before me appeared two boxes, one labelled *Memory*, the other *Notes*. The Customs House official gave me a look, and said: "Small Latin and less Greek?" And then I woke up.

It is gratifying to note that the Stygian *douanier* apparently had no instructions to check the import of English, which Mr. Baring has carted about with him in ample measure; and I myself have detected no Sanskrit and less Scandinavian. But otherwise that paragraph shows well enough how Mr. Baring has framed his declaration, and suggests the variety of samples he can produce in token of good faith.

And richness, as well as variety! Because these three hundred pages bring us into a curiously intimate contact with a personality, a manner of life, a cast of thought, not just with a critical intelligence compiling an anthology of elegant extracts. His book, Mr. Baring says in a preface, "is not meant for scholars nor for the learned, but for those who, like myself, although they have only a smattering of letters, are fond of books and fond of reading." An understatement, I felt as I read on: and felt more certain of it when I found him, discoursing agreeably on style, thus quoting Pascal:

> Quand on voit le style naturel, on est tout étonné et ravi; car on s'attendait de voir un auteur, et on trouve un homme.

For the apparently haphazard pages, sometimes with conversational comment, sometimes only presenting one with a few chosen lines and leaving one tempted to comment for oneself, do not suggest simply a man "fond of books," but a man who knows books in terms of life—a rarer and a finer thing. And that Mr. Baring has not himself been blind to the distinction (which nobody knowing his work would suppose) is shown clearly enough by another remark which he cites with approval:

> Si un auteur n'était qu'un écrivain, Gautier serait un de nos plus grands hommes, mais il ne faut jamais oublier qu'un auteur doit être un écrivain, et aussi autre chose.

Nevertheless, for writing simply as writing, Mr. Baring has a very lively and catholic sensibility; and many of his readers will be refreshed by his enjoyment of felicities as varied as Webster's

> Why should only I
> Of all the other princes of the world
> Be cas'd up, like a holy relic? I have youth
> And a little beauty.

—or the close, taut passion of Catullus:

> Caeli, Lesbia nostra, Lesbia illa,
> illa Lesbia, quam Catullus unam
> plus quam se atque suos amavit omnes,
> nunc in quadriviis et angiportis
> glubit magnanimos Remi nepotes.

—or as a Henry James metaphor:

> He dived once more into his story, and was drawn down, as by a siren's hand, to where, in the dim underworld of fiction, the great glazed tank of art, strange silent objects float.

—or landscapes from Crabbe, Virgil, Maupassant, Hilaire Belloc, Tennyson, too long to reproduce even in this generous show of borrowed lantern-slides; or the lightning-flash of Corneille's Medea dialogue:

> Votre pays vous hait, votre époux est sans foi,
> Dans un si grand revers que vous reste-t-il?
> *Médée* Moi.

—or some excellent passages to illustrate his remark that he has "never come across a sentence quoted as having been said by Napoleon without wishing to copy it out," notably this one, unfamiliar and illuminating as well as excellent in its style:

> Moi, je n'ai pas d'ambition . . . ou si j'en ai, elle m'est si naturelle, elle m'est tellement innée, elle est si bien attachée à mon existence qu'elle est comme le sang qui coule dans mes veines, comme l'air que je respire.

No reader, of course, will always see eye to eye with Mr Baring. On one or two pages, I was taken aback by the sententious, and at another boggled at the *faux bon*. The little gem of Holloway discretion on page 293, again, is probably lost on readers who do not know its setting.

But the virtue of Mr. Baring's book lies in the fact that it must primarily have been built up for his own delectation. And this he conveys, not only implicitly in the quotations of his choice, but explicitly in the informal commentary (not to mention the numerous translations from his own pen) with which they are amplified. Text and comment are often agreeably wed in unanticipated ways. A chance glimpse of the mother of Talleyrand, for instance, leads Mr. Baring forward:

> "Elle ne parlait que par nuances; jamais elle n'a dit un bon mot: c'etait quelque chose de trop exprimé. Les bons mots se retiennent; elle ne voulait que plaire et perdre ce qu'elle disait."
>
> [She] must have possessed the quintessence and the rarest form of wit; that wit which is forgotten as soon as it is born, because it is so exquisitely appropriate to its context, to the time and place at which it is said, and to all the circumstances which give it birth, that it cannot be torn from them; and it is here that it differs from an epigram. Epigram is remembered for a time, but if it is merely brilliant without being profound, it soon has an appearance of tarnished tinsel. Boswell once said: "When I complained of having dined at a splendid table without hearing one sentence of conversation worthy to be remembered, Dr. Johnson said, 'There is seldom any such conversation.'"

Or he comments thus on a phrase of Newman's:

> "Those rare saints of God who rise up from time to time in the Catholic Church like angels in disguise."
>
> They are angels, but they are in disguise; and it has often struck me that one of the differences between the Catholic and the Anglican Church is this: in the Anglican Church personality is all-important: a clergyman attracts attention and commands a following by his personality, or even by his peculiarities; by being like a pillar-box, as it were, if it were painted sky-blue.
>
> In the Catholic Church a priest is like an ordinary pillar-box, indistinguishable from a million others; but sometimes, owing to the sanctity of an individual priest, one of these pillar-boxes will become as transparent as crystal, and the light within it will shine upon the world like the lamp of a lighthouse. These are the angels in disguise that Newman talks of. . . .

And the five or six pages in which he talks of Renan, the peculiar quality of whose scepticism he brings out very well ("En réalité, peu de gens ont le droit de ne pas croire au christianisme"), and of the German higher criticism and how its principles apply (or don't) to secular literature, are a good example of the conversational method of exposition which he practises so well. On Renan's prose style, by the way, he elsewhere cites a pleasingly vivid tribute by Taine, who one day "took a page of Renan and held it up to the window against the light, saying: 'On ne voit pas avec quoi c'est fait!'" And repeatedly Mr. Baring's instinctive way of setting old and new side by side (as for instance where he discerns the deep affinities between a war-time poem by Patrick Shaw-Stewart and a passage, beautifully translated, from the

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MORNING POST

Iliad) bears testimony to that coherence and breadth of appreciation which to-day is too often unachieved by the quick-fire critics.

In fine, the arts of life, nearly all of them, are lovingly commemorated in this informal monument by one who must have practised and relished them in many ways and places. His imaginative writing has enabled us to participate in various created worlds which have the curious reality of a transmuted experience. These memories and notes, here displayed so unpretentiously, make a valuable marginal commentary on Mr. Baring's original work: his texts often give, as it were, the humane authority for themes he has dealt with in a different medium. A deep knowledge of the hearts of men and women is amplified by a wide knowledge of that long-accumulated inheritance of human experience which is called literature; and such a book as this is a reminder of how stable are the standards of taste and conduct which it mirrors. A reminder, too, quite badly needed, that urbanity of mind and manner does not connote artifice, shallowness, or falseness.

Have You Anything to Declare? is a book with more depth and solidity than its gently humorous title might suggest, and it deserves to be recommended to readers who have learned to complement reading with thinking. And one last quotation, Johnsonian this time, shall provide a conclusive commendation. "People seldom read a book which is given them, and few are given. The way to spread a work is to sell it at a low price." Its publishers here have done their duty. HAMISH MILES

THE LETTERS OF LENIN

The Letters of Lenin. Translated by ELIZABETH HILL and DORIS MUDIE. *Chapman and Hall.* 15*s.*

This excellently translated volume contains three hundred and forty letters which range in date from 1896 to 1922. They vary from the briefest note to letters of several pages in which Lenin develops his ideas on a particular problem at some length. Taken together, they are not only an invaluable picture of the man himself; they are also an indispensable guide to the study of his method. It is greatly to be hoped that a further selection will soon follow (the Russian edition contains over one thousand letters) and that this collection will soon be reprinted at a price which makes it more available to the general public.

The Lenin these letters generally reveal will not now be new to English readers. But they will welcome the innumerable glimpses they give of qualities which appear with greater clarity than in his writings. How profoundly he held to his principles, how relentless was his energy, how unending his contempt for men who compromised on what he believed to be vital, how superb was his grasp of the significance of detail—all this was well known. But there are other qualities in this volume perhaps less adequately understood in this country. His tender feelings for his family, not least for his life-long companion, Krupskaya; his modesty; his capacity for enthusiastic encouragement; the depth of his friendships; the wide range of his mind; all this, the revelation of Lenin's humanity, is more clearly seen here than in any other of his published works. And the incredible depth of devotion to an ideal revealed by these pages is almost literally beyond words. His mind rarely relaxed; for him the battle was never still. Day by day, month by month, he is avid for news, he is informing himself of publications, he is seeking to penetrate appearance to the Socialist reality beneath. The book is a revelation of supreme accomplishment in the face of what, to almost anyone else, would have seemed insuperable difficulties. He hardly ever knew what comfort was. He was fighting not only a ruthless tyranny at home, but also with the hundred difficulties that accumulate when the battle is being waged in the conditions of exile. There is not, I believe, a line in these letters to suggest a single regret at the price involved in his effort. There are anger, excitement, vehement insistence. Yet, behind them all, there is an inner serenity of mind which is remarkable. And, connected with that serenity, there is a selflessness of unexampled quality. All Lenin's ambitions are for the movement; there is none for himself. There is no sense of the position that he occupied, even after 1917. There is no craving for power, nor jealousy of rivals. He is a great comrade wrapped up in a campaign which enables him to transcend self. Even the most passionate of his opponents could not rise from these letters without a new respect for the man. If there exists anywhere a better example of personal nobility in the history of modern politics, I do not know it.

The editors have, on the whole, done their work well, though rather more full biographical notes would have been helpful. It is clear, for instance, that the Hilkirt of p. 381 is Morris Hillquit, the well-known American Socialist leader. In the next selection that will, I hope, be made, it would be interesting to have a larger number of the letters of interest to British readers for their reference to our own movement; and it would be particularly useful if some of the letters to Lenin could be published. There is in existence, for example, a letter of 1905 from Mr. Ramsay MacDonald which explains a good deal of the psychology of the British Labour Party. H. J. LASKI

THE SALT OF THE EARTH

My Fill of Days. By SIR PETER CHALMERS MITCHELL. *Faber.* 15*s.*

The Unexpected Years. By LAURENCE HOUSMAN. *Cape.* 10*s.* 6*d.*

I remember Francis Birrell once exclaiming that one ought to be a man for the first part of one's life, and a woman for the second. No doubt he had just been talking to a charming old lady, or listening to a disagreeable old man. And I think that, more often than not, after the age of about fifty, women improve in character, and men deteriorate. But I have just been bowled over by the intelligence, charm and goodness of two septuagenarian men, as they reveal themselves in their autobiographies—Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell and Mr. Laurence Housman. Neither of them affects to reveal the whole truth about himself, and we are left ignorant of the exact part played in their lives by romantic love, blind passion or even intimate friendship. Sir Peter, indeed, gives the impression of an extrovert too continuously immersed in useful activities to have had much leisure for personal sentiments, but Mr. Housman has obviously always been a man tremulous with sensibility, and one wishes he would bequeath to us the history of his heart.

Sir Peter is a notably efficient man, who has succeeded in everything he has undertaken: not only did he make the London and Whipsnade Zoos the prosperous and exemplary institutions that they are, but he was a valued and regular member of the *Times* staff, he is an authority on French literature, and has a lively taste for modern painting. Whatever he discusses he makes interesting, and he discusses a rare number of subjects and persons. From many enlightening anecdotes, let me quote the speech which he heard at Christ Church soon after the war:

> Am I happy? I do not know; I am so old and tired. But of this I am certain, and I ask you young men, the makers of the future, to remember it. I doubt if any object is worth the horrors of war. It may be that your only object should be, to use an English phrase that may displease you, "peace at any price."

The speaker was Clemenceau.

Sir Peter had retired to Malaga, when the Spanish revolution exploded. He protected a rich neighbouring family—to which he had no obligations of friendship—and at last smuggled them out of the country. Whereupon they at once broke faith by returning to Spain on the rebel side. His account of the incident is amusing, for he is politically far to the Left. In an epilogue he explains the various practical reasons for his dislike of capitalism. All his experience as a scientific worker is that "neither the whip of necessity nor the spur of gaining greater gaining power is a wise or necessary stimulus to any work, and that both are harmful to the best work." (This is, to say the least, vastly more true than Dr. Johnson's "No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money.") Sir Peter is one more example of the ever-spreading antagonism among intellectuals to the capitalist system. With few exceptions artists and scientists either support the Left, or turn a blind eye to politics. The intellectuals, it is true, are a tiny minority, but their defection appears prophetic. They are

> Birds of Knowledge, that in dusky Air
> Chatter Futurity.

A case that cannot command disinterested defence from powerful minds is eventually lost by default.

Mr. Housman, as he admits, would have preferred like most artists to stick to his job and to leave the politicians to theirs. It was his fate to be dragged into the cockpit by feminism. With Mr. Nevinson and Mr. Brailsford he was a protagonist in the Men's Woman Suffrage Union. He is still kept out of his ivory tower, now by a passionate pacifism. For many the chief interest of his book will no doubt be his recollections of his brother, the illustrious poet, of whom he writes with affectionate understanding.

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Not content with this, they tell them stories in little pictures to show that, owing to their disgusting habits, their children are ashamed of them, their lovers avoid them and their neighbours laugh at them. Finally, they say, in effect, " Come to us, you miserable wretches and we will render you fit members of civilised society."

Well, Well.

People seem to lap it up quite meekly; but as servants of the public for 140 years, we frankly dislike both these methods of approach. The grovelling and the offensive seem equally undignified. We take it for granted that the teeth of every reader of the *New Statesman* are considerably whiter than snow (driven or the other kind), that they treat their bodies with respect, have up-to-date ideas about hygiene and are fussy about their Laundries. If they smell at all, it is with the faintest odour of myrrh, aloes and cassia. But the most painstaking precautions will not render them immune from

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The poet seems to have behaved with all the grumpy superiority which an elder brother and a don could exhibit. "Without malice he much enjoyed putting me in my place, though I was sufficiently aware of it." Perhaps the most interesting and sympathetic fact in the book about A. E. is the remark, made to his doctor in the nursing-home where he died, "I know you have brought me here so that I may not commit suicide."

Mr. Housman gives a fascinating picture of his childhood, which may be recommended to anyone inclined, as is now the fashion, to idealise the Victorian scene. The conventional religion, the sexual taboos, the hypocrisy and general stuffiness of nineteenth-century family life are brilliantly presented.

> One hears a good deal of talk nowadays about the decay of religion; and the Victorian age is spoken of as though it had been an age of faith. My own impression is that it combined much foolish superstition with a smug adaptation of Christianity to social convention and worldly ends; and that the main aim of the Established Church was—with as little mutual disturbance as possible—to make Christianity support Conservatism, and Conservatism support Christianity.

Coming from the author of the *Little Plays of St. Francis*, this indictment is weighty. His picture of the delights of childhood in a garden relieves the grimness of his account of family life under an Evangelical stepmother and school life at Bromsgrove under a peculiarly caddish headmaster.

Mr. Housman has a very nice sense of humour, and his book is packed with amusing sidelights. A review of his first book, a selection from the writings of Blake, began with the words, "To admire Blake is the mark of a clique." (The historian of taste will be interested to know that the reviewer was Mr. Andrew Lang.) Characteristic of Victorianism at its worst also is the fact that he heard a venerable Canon of Winchester thank God that 'in this Christian land of ours' unbelievers had on their conscience not only the sin of unbelief, but hypocrisy as well; since for worldly reasons they were obliged to conform, and pretend to faith though they had it not.

Mr. Housman's love of animals, his feeling for the countryside, his work for a more reasonable attitude to sex, his troubles with the Lord Chamberlain, who has only now consented to license the admirable Queen Victoria plays, his devotion to St. Francis, are all expressed in an excellently clear, unaffected and elegant style which carries the reader smoothly along as if he were on skates. Here is further support for Sir Peter's thesis about the unimportance of the money motive. From the age of twenty-eight to forty-seven Mr. Housman's average yearly earnings (including over two thousand pounds for one successful book) were only £365—and he was an industrious writer. He gives us the figures in detail, he explains, for two reasons: "First, because my indifference to paying popularity has, I believe, in the long run helped and not hindered my output of things which seemed to me worth doing, and secondly because my small income has not prevented me leading a happy life."

It would be useful to know how many writers and painters in this country earn more than a thousand a year. They like their job, and no doubt do not deserve to be rich. But then, someone may ask, who does? Much as I should like to be rich, I can see no reason why society owes me wealth. The business man, however, seems mysteriously to think that society does owe it to him. Is this because he is so rare a type? Because he is irreplaceable? Because his work is so unpleasant that no one would undertake it without the prospect of inordinate rewards?

Some such questions are bound, I think, to present themselves to readers of these two books, though only a small portion of each touches upon such matters. And I wish that some champion of things as they are would explain to me why, if men like Sir Peter and Mr. Housman—men who are the salt of the earth, will give the best of themselves for so little money, it is necessary for other men to be rewarded with such fabulous Danegeld. In fact, would not such manufacturers as Sir Herbert Austin and Lord Nuffield do their jobs equally well for the public benefit if they received only the payment of a scientist or a writer?

RAYMOND MORTIMER

Milton received £5

for *Paradise Lost*, Beethoven 50 ducats each for the first three Rasumovsky quartets—but then they had no *Authors Handbook* to help them find a better market. The 1937 edition of this annual, which is published with the official sanction and approval of the Authors' Society, is now on sale; it is full of just that information about copyright, libel, agreements, agents, syndicates, broadcasting, etc., which enables the timid author (playwright or composer) to say boo to his publisher with confidence. The not-too-successful author (playwright or composer) will find many hints about selling his stuff, also helpful feature articles by experts.

All this for 3*s.* 6*d.*—comprehensive and impartial; but it must be *The Authors (Playwrights and Composers) Handbook* (1937). No other handbook is so up-to-date. In a blue-green jacket, at every bookshop, 3*s.* 6*d. net.*

NELSON

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TWENTIETH-CENTURY ECONOMICS

An Introduction to Economic Analysis and Policy. By J. E. MEADE. *Oxford University Press.* 10*s.*

Mr. Meade's book is in effect a text-book of economics written on a new plan. Instead of beginning with the old assumption of a perfectly competitive society in which all the "factors of production" are fully employed, Mr. Meade begins with unemployment and its causes and with a discussion of the conditions necessary in order to secure "full employment." He then goes on to a consideration of competition and monopoly and the various situations intermediate between them, and of the various methods of regulating or preventing monopolistic exploitation. This leads him to a discussion of "planning" and of public management of industry, in the course of which he contends strongly that a "price system" based on competitive price-offers both by consumers and by the various controllers of production for the use of land, capital and labour, is no less necessary under a Socialist system than under any other, as means of securing maximum service to the consumers. The next section deals with the distribution of incomes from work and property, and with various suggested methods of reducing inequality of wealth and income. Then comes a discussion of the "supply of the primary factors of production"—land, labour and capital—of which the most interesting section is that in which Mr. Meade argues that there exists for any society an *optimum* amount of "saving," as well as an optimum population, or supply of labour. Finally, Part V deals with a number of international problems, from the Gold Standard to the "economic causes of war."

Throughout Mr. Meade uses as simple language as he can without falsifying his argument, which is in the main an excellently clear summary of the economic doctrines of such writers as Mr. Keynes and Mr. Pigou. He avoids algebra and, for the most part, graphical presentation in favour of numerical examples, which are easier for most readers to grasp, but more tedious to present. To examinees his book is likely to be invaluable, for it answers just the questions that modern examiners usually set and obsolescent text-books entirely fail to answer.

Mr. Meade's personal standpoint appears to be that of an exceedingly moderate and gradualist collectivism, and, theoretically, of an attempt to reconcile the extension of public ownership and redistribution of social policies with the continued operation of most of the laws usually associated with the working of "capitalist"

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society. The name of Marx does not occur in his index; but as the names of Smith, Ricardo, and Malthus do not appear either, there is little in that. There is, however, no consideration of the Marxian approach to economics, the entire problem being envisaged from the orthodox standpoint of the "pricing system." Within these limits, the treatment seems at times rather disproportionate in scale; but this is mainly because most attention is given to questions which have been recently much in the professional economists' minds. Altogether, Mr. Meade's new arrangement of the subject constitutes his book a real contribution to the difficult task of adjusting the "shape" of economic theory to the needs and interests of the twentieth century.

G. D. H. COLE

THE GENTLE NEWT

War With the Newts. By KAREL CAPEK. Translated by M. and R. WEATHERALL. *Allen and Unwin.* 7s. 6d.

This political fantasy by Karel Capek is in part a return to the mood of *The Insect Play*; since writing the play, though, Mr. Capek has read *Brave New World* and seen more of the world himself. His new vision is both pretty and terrifying. Who are the Newts? The story begins delightfully with an old Dutch captain who has come to terms with some salamander-like creatures, three feet high, on an island off Sumatra. It has been their habit to emerge at dusk from the shallows; one head after another bobs out of the water with popping eyes; then they advance on land, waddling doubtfully, and their "Ts, ts, ts!" like the signals of women at street-corners, catches the Captain's attention. He finds that they can handle knives, and employs them for pearl-fishing. A company is formed to exploit them, so that very soon the market is glutted with pearls. The Newts have a value, however, as peons and being encouraged they multiply rapidly. They are set to work manufacturing dams; a few isolated specimens find their way into travelling circuses and zoos. There is a delicious episode at the London Zoo where the keeper of the Aquarium is startled late one night by a voice at his shoulder; it is the new salamander, *Andrias Scheuchzeri*, speaking. Blinking its eyes, it repeats the things that visitors have said during the day. From this it learns to converse. The keeper gets in the way of lending it newspapers, which it reads attentively; and when the phenomenon of a talking Newt is discovered by the director of the Zoo, it already possesses the education of an average Englishman. An examination is arranged:

"Who is King of England?"
"King Edward. God bless him."
"Good, Andy. Who is the greatest English writer?"
"Kipling."
"Very good. Have you read anything by him?"
"No. How do you like Gracie Fields?"
"We will ask the questions. . . ."

Talking Newts become a commonplace; Newt-training schools and universities spring up; travellers to Pacific islands enjoy bringing back memories of a chat with these soft-spoken creatures in the dusk. So long as the Newts work hard and "know their place," all goes well; but they revolt. Their numbers increase so rapidly that in the search for new shallows they are forced to make inroads on the coast, which they do by means of dynamite. After "incidents" in the Cocos Islands and the Channel, America and England are attacked; and so the last war begins, in which humanity will be blotted out.

While episodes in this fantasy are as gay as a film by Clair, the general effect of an encroaching horde of peons—millions of Newts blinking mildly, fluttering their childish hands and croaking platitudes—is sombre and terrifying. There are moments when this vision becomes acutely real. The satire, too, direct and indirect, is at times brilliantly effective. And yet the book just misfires. Who are the Newts? Well, they are an ugly, monotonous, gentle, ruthless, spawning race of engineers with an amphibian world state which has borrowed its tools from Man. The prehistoric reptile from which they descend is a possible ancestor of the human race (Mr. Capek gives fascinating details, partly scientific, of the life, anatomy and sex habits of the Newt). They are also, by implication, the human beings of *Brave New World;* but how much more depressing and convincing Huxley's prophecy is! Not direct enough for prophecy, too muddled to be a really effective thriller, *War With the Newts* seems to fall into the usual ditch of political allegories. It is too long, padded out with newspaper reports and wireless bulletins; towards the end it tails off badly. It is, however, alarming, entertaining, and at moments even oddly impressive.

G. W. S.

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"This is a book to be commended both for its intelligence and its beauty." HOWARD SPRING in the *Evening Standard.*

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THE YOUNG REVOLUTIONARY

John Reed: The Making of a Revolutionary. By GRANVILLE HICKS. *Macmillan.* 18s.

One of the strangest destinies of this century was that of John Reed, the young poet from Harvard who made himself a name all over America as a war correspondent during Villa's campaigns in Mexico, becoming thus an almost legendary person at the age of twenty-six; and who only a few years later could scarcely get an article published by a "respectable" American newspaper on account of his radical sympathies, but had written a book on the October Revolution which has become a classic in its kind; who was born of prosperous bourgeois parents in Portland, Oregon, and was buried among the Bolshevik heroes by the Kremlin Wall.

Mr. Granville Hicks's biography gives all the details one could want to document Reed's life—perhaps too many. The book is cluttered up with the names of people who were in this or that club at Harvard with Reed, who collaborated on one or other of the large number of papers and magazines with which he was associated during his short career in New York. It also devotes a great deal more space to Reed's activities as a poet than can be justified by the poetry itself. He showed no outstanding originality or power in his verse; it was the qualities of a poet which went into his journalism that made up his real originality. Nor does Mr. Hicks make as clear as one would have liked the process that turned Reed into a "radical," in its decisive phase before and after the Paterson strike. But the story in its main outlines is well told, and one gets a vivid impression of a restless, vital personality, rapidly changing scene after scene in his search for a field where he could give his talents full play in the service of his developing Socialist faith.

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seeing and feeling that the capitalist system was monstrously unjust, and that the triumph of the people's revolution was the only way out. He was never a strong theorist, but his practical education was about as complete as it could be: he reported strikes, was imprisoned with the strikers, saw the struggle of the landless Mexican peasants for freedom at first hand and could appreciate better than any other American how deliberately the struggle was being misrepresented by the interested capitalist press; he saw the European war on both sides of the lines and all its horrors on every front; he was at hand in all the critical moves of the Bolshevik seizure of power, knew the leaders personally, and later suffered in his own person the savage outlawry the authorities of capitalist countries meted out to Communist sympathisers. He is equally interesting as a forerunner of a modern type, a man with all the gifts for poetic, literary creation who turns to journalism. The conditions for the emergence of a John Reed have only existed for half a century or less. He is the child of the million-circulation press and popular education, of an age in which social and international conflicts involve and interest the masses more and more closely; he is what the Byron who wrote *Don Juan* and fought for Greece might have been if he had lived to-day.

JOHN LEHMANN

OUR DWINDLING LEGACY

London County Council Survey of London. Vol. XVI. Charing Cross. (The Parish of St. Martin's in the Fields, Part 1). By G. H. GATER and E. P. WHEELER. 52*s.* 6*d.*
Vol. XVII. The Village of Highgate (Parish of St. Pancras, Part 1). By P. W. LOVELL and W. McB. MARCHAM. 21*s.* Published by the L.C.C.

The two latest volumes of the admirably planned and sumptuously executed L.C.C. Survey of London describe what we have lost and what we still precariously retain of our architectural inheritance. A growing admiration among educated persons for the domestic architecture of the eighteenth century keeps pace with a growing appetite among property owners both private and public for the destruction of such buildings. We were asked to celebrate the reign of King George V by paying for the demolition of some of the most conspicuous Georgian mansions in Westminster, and one can only hope that we are not now to be called upon to celebrate the brilliant if brief succeeding reign by pulling down Chelsea Hospital or the Banqueting Hall. The noble buildings of which such scholarly accounts and such excellent illustrations are given in these two volumes seem specially well calculated to excite the destructive fervour of Archbishops, Dukes, Ecclesiastical Commissioners, administrators of Crown Lands, and all the other landlords who eye good architecture with the appraising admiration of a butcher at a fat stock show. The Horse Guards, The Admiralty, Admiralty House, are the most important buildings in Vol. XVI; Ken Wood and the delightful house in the Grove and South Grove, Highgate, in Vol. XVII. (Not only the houses, but their owners in the past are chronicled.) The loss of these buildings would be far graver than the sale to America of the Gainsboroughs, Reynolds and Hogarths in the National Gallery, for it would be irreplaceable. But while a storm of opposition could easily and effectively be raised against the sale of a picture belonging to the nation, the demolition of our architectural treasures is thought to concern only the caprice and avarice of their proprietors. Nor would even the transference of ownership from private to public hands ensure preservation, for it was a government office which gaily proposed the destruction of Carlton House Terrace, and the County Council itself which pulled down Waterloo Bridge. A campaign to educate public opinion is urgently required. Already a sentiment exists that a mediaeval church or an Elizabethan house deserves protection. Probably the demolition of the pleasantly picturesque timbered houses in Holborn could more easily be prevented than the destruction of a masterpiece like Chelsea Hospital. Is it impossible to infect people with the same sentimental attachment to post-Restoration architecture which they already feel for older work? Is it impossible to abolish the right of the owner to unearned increment obtainable by destruction?

The powers at present possessed by the Government and the County Councils for the preservation of important and beautiful buildings are grotesquely inadequate. The admirable activities of the National Trust require to be supplemented by immediate legislation. Unless some measures are soon taken, this Survey will be all that remains of eighteenth-century London.

R. M.

SHORTER NOTICES

Occident and Orient. The Gaster Memorial Volume. Edited by BRUNO SCHINDLER. *Taylor's Foreign Press.* £3 3*s.*

Dr. Moses Gaster, *Haham* (wise man) or chief of the Sephardic Community of British Jews established in London in the time of Oliver Cromwell, has lately celebrated his eightieth birthday, and in honour of the occasion has been presented with an Anniversary Volume, *Occident and Orient*. This work comprises a series of studies in Semitic Philology and Literature, Jewish History, Philosophy and Folklore. The editors, Dr. Bruno Schindler and Dr. Marmorstein, have laid nearly sixty writers under willing contribution and have been unable to find space for many others. The range of subjects chosen by contributors, distinguished scholars with few exceptions, is extraordinarily wide. To pick subjects at random, there are papers on Jewish Art, the interpretation of certain psalms, a new Asianic language, literary style in Judaeo-Spanish, Confession of Sins in the Hittite Religion and the position of the Canaanite Slave. It is a striking collection of papers by specialists, threaded together on a string of devotion to this country's greatest Jewish scholar, a man who has taken all knowledge to be his province. On his arrival in England from Rumania in the 'eighties Gaster was appointed Ilchester Lecturer in Slavonic Literature. Later, after he had been chosen to be head of the Senior Jewish Congregation, he became a member of the Council of the Society of Biblical Archaeology, Vice-President of the Royal Asiatic Society and later President of the Folklore and Jewish Historical Societies. His earliest publication is dated 1873, his latest (1936) is numbered 272; he has a collection of MSS. awaiting publication and has given valuable manuscripts to public libraries. He is the first living authority on the literature of his native land, Rumania, and on the literature of the Samaritans, master of a dozen languages, a facile speaker and on intimate terms with his library of 30,000 books. *Occident and Orient*, written in several languages, is a worthy tribute to a scholar whose name and reputation are recognised in every centre of learning whether in the Old World or the New.

Anarchy or Hierarchy. By S. DE MADARIAGA. *Allen & Unwin.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

Between the rival shouts and threatenings of Fascist and Communist Señor de Madariaga's level and reasonable voice is heard. To the partisan of one side or the other, his book will seem to be a mere academic panacea, after the model of those ideal constitutions which eighteenth century gentlemen amused themselves by constructing. But the exact contrary is the case; Señor de Madariaga has gone to Nature for his constitution. He has tried to show that there is indeed a natural order of society, one which Nature herself prefers, and which therefore gives the best results. This order he calls hierarchy, the threefold division of society into aristocracy, bourgeoisie, and people. This is admirable; the only trouble is: has not human society by this time gone beyond Nature, fortunately or unfortunately? One would almost think that Señor de Madariaga had never heard of industrialism. He considers the preponderance of "workmen" over "peasants" in the ranks of the "people" a disturbing and unnatural phenomenon. This is no doubt true, but it is precisely this phenomenon which has made modern history in all but a few European countries. The difficulty cannot be overcome merely by deprecating it. A disregard of this central fact is a serious weakness in a book which does make the most admirable suggestions for the reform of the democracies which have so far survived. Señor de Madariaga strips democracy (he is himself a democrat) of its unsavoury associations of vote-catching humbug and the farce by which fifteen typists can out-vote fourteen professors of economics, but he does not show how democracy can defeat more formidable foes, as it must do, if it is to survive. He mentions the tyranny of international finance, which cuts across all other questions whatsoever, but does not suggest how that tyranny is to be destroyed. His plans for the Golden Age (back to Nature in politics) arouse positive nostalgia. But admirably wise as these plans are, one may well ask what chance they have of being applied under our present rulers.

Less Paint More Vanity. By A. LE MATTHISON. *Heath Cranton.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

A year or two ago Mr. Matthison published his autobiography under the title "Art, Paint, and Vanity," and in this pleasantly discursive book he gives us more of his reminiscences of life as he has lived it first as a telegraphist, and for the past half-century as a successful manufacturer of paint and varnish. But excellent as were his descriptions of his work in telegraphy and factory, what gave his autobiography, and again gives this book, its charm, is his divided allegiance, for in his leisure he has always turned to the concert hall, the theatre and the music hall for recreation, and is evidently not sure even now that he was right when he resisted the temptation to go on the stage. From his infancy he has been in touch with the professions of music and the drama. His mother was the sister of Madame Edith Wynne and herself a contralto of distinction, his sister is Edith Wynne Matthison, who succeeded Ellen Terry as Irving's leading lady, and with such connections and a natural leaning towards the arts he has much to tell us of the theatre and concert hall of his time. He also writes racily of the changes he has seen, notably in Birmingham, where most of his life has been spent.

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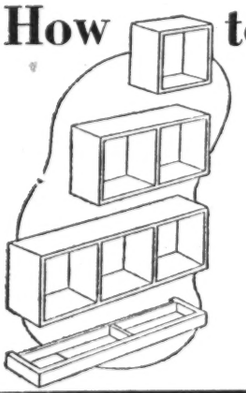
How tempting  is the perennial freshness, the innate utility of UNIX *multiplying* Book Units ! Immediate outlay needn't stiffen resistence ; the UNIX illustrated suggestion folder (free and post free) outlines a plan through which you get your units at once and pay at leisure with the odd money diverted from less essential expenditure. Ask for a copy or call :— PHOENIX Showrooms : Chandos Street, Charing Cross, London, WC2

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INDEX

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GRAMOPHONE NOTES

THE mild Bruckner boom which England seems to be enjoying (better late than never) is resulting in a crop of really magnificent records. After the *7th Symphony* the *4th* (*The "Romantic"*), played by the Dresden State Opera Orchestra under Karl Böhm (H.M.V. DB4450–7). This symphony suffered a good deal of alteration on the advice of Bruckner's mentors, the brothers Schalk—advice that was not invariably good; but this recording gives the original version. Without going so far as to say that the Schalks misinterpreted Bruckner's mind as completely as Rimsky-Korsakoff did Moussorgsky's when he edited *Boris*, one feels no doubt that the original is both stronger and better constructed than the version one has been accustomed to hear. To the Bruckner tyro, too, this is probably the most immediately acceptable of all the symphonies: it is closer knit, the themes are invariably fine, and the whole atmosphere is romantically attractive. Romantically, in the forest-stream-hunting-horn sense, for the quality of the emotion is no more romantic here than in any of the other symphonies. But for those who know and love the Austrian landscape—the country round the monastery of Sankt Florian, for instance, where this composer lived for so long—this music is irresistible. The opening, in particular, is more mysteriously beautiful than that of any other symphony I know. The performance and recording are extremely fine. So are those of the Brahms's *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, played by the New York Philharmonic Orchestra under Toscanini (H.M.V. DB3031–2). We have had several recordings of this work of late years, which would seem to point to its popularity. It is indeed one of the best sets of variations ever written, and the present performance emphasises its dramatic, rhetorical qualities. Toscanini's ability to make one feel anew the beauty of some well-known phrase (I remarked on this last month, apropos of the Beethoven *7th Symphony*) is here fully apparent. The *Presto* movement really *is* taken *presto*—for a change, and the vitality and volume of the *Finale* are astonishing. Without possessing quite the thrill of a Toscanini performance, Weingartner's rendering of the Beethoven *8th Symphony* with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (Col. LX563–5) is entirely satisfying. It is a work in which the exact *tempi* matter extremely—was it Wagner or Mendelssohn who first pointed out that the third movement (which is really the "slow" movement of the symphony) should be taken ponderously and not as fast as an ordinary minuet? Weingartner's *tempi* seem to me perfect. It is unfortunate that, as in other recordings by the same orchestra, one notices a constant distortion in the tone of the violins. Artur and Karl Ulrich Schnabel, with the London Symphony Orchestra under Adrian Boult (H.M.V. DB3033–5) earn our gratitude by their adroit performance of Mozart's *Concerto in E flat* (K.365). Melodic warmth, especially in the famously lovely *Andante*, is the distinguishing feature of this work. The two-piano texture is wonderfully rich; the two pianists play with perfect dexterity and are never "out," even in the double shakes.

There are two string quartets issued this month, both of them well worth acquiring—Schumann in *A. op. 71 No. 3*, played by the Léner Quartet (Col. LX566–9), and Haydn in *B. op. 76 No. 4*, played by the Prisca Quartet (Decca DE7066–8). Schumann wrote this quartet *d'un trait*, yet it is among his best chamber music, being full of that spontaneous lyrical tenderness characteristic of this composer's genius. I know that few people like string quartets: they are an irretrievably highbrow form of music; but I feel there must be many who will like this one, which is played with the ease of complete understanding. The Haydn is a serious, meaty work, very neatly performed. It is interesting to compare Schnabel's interpretation of Beethoven's *Sonata in F Minor, op. 78* with the new recording by Egon Petri (Col. LX576). Personally I prefer the latter: it is less pedantic and more lyrical (and this little sonata is purely lyrical). The runs are far more fluent than Schnabel's, who is apt to rush and "mess" them, especially in the second movement. I recommend Szigeti's recording of Ravel's *Pièce en forme de Habanera* (Col. LX575): it is an extremely pretty piece, and he plays it exquisitely. The Scriabin *Study in Thirds*, which accompanies it, gives no musical pleasure; and the Weber *Sonata No. 3 in D* does not amount to much.

The best vocal record this month—and a superb one it is—is "Lass uns fliehen" and "So hold, so reizend" from Verdi's *La Traviata*, sung by Margherita Perras and Helde Roswaenge (H.M.V. DB4458). This is delicious music magnificently delivered. Two airs from the same composer's *Ballo in Maschera*—"Für dein Glück" and "Du allein hast das Herz mir entwendet"—are well sung by Alexander Sved, with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra (Decca CA8265), though this voice has a slight tremolo and the music is not the best in that particular opera. It is a pity that the libretto of Puccini's *La Fanciulla del West* (what a name to write home about!) is so inept, because some of the composer's best music, outside *Turandot* and the misesteemed *Manon Lescaut*, is embedded in it. So I recommend you to try "Or son sei mesi," sung by Joseph Schmidt with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra (Parl. R2292); though the obverse, "Ch'ella mi creda libero," is in the Tosca-Butterfly style. Ria Ginster gives an impeccable rendering of Haydn's "With Verdure Clad" (*The Creation*) and "O What Comfort" (*The Seasons*), also with the Berlin State Opera Orchestra (Parl. E11313). Finally, I heartily recommend Granados' *Tonadillas*, perfectly sung by Conchita Supervia (Parl. RO20324–5); the idiom of these charming songs is not inexorably Spanish, though characteristic enough.

I have been hauled over the coals for suggesting that Duke Ellington was getting into a groove: it appears that records made by him years ago are now issued in this country as if they were his latest. This seems an anomalous practice, bound to lead to remarks such as the one I made. Of new dance tunes, *Easy to Love* seems to me best put across by Frances Langford, with Jimmy Dorsey's band (Br. 02359). The same is true of *I've Got You Under My Skin* (Br. 02359), though Henry King's version is also good, in its way, with some excellent piano playing (Br. 02360). *Did You Mean It?* I liked best in the recording by Carroll Gibbons and the Savoy Orpheans (Col. FB1592). *Who Loves You?* (Ambrose, Decca F6226) is not a bad tune, if you don't listen too attentively; *To Mary—with Love*, played by Eddie Dudin and band (H.M.V. BD5145), has sex appeal; *Close to Me*, played by Tommy Dorsey and band (H.M.V. BD5151) is not a bad waltz; and Ted Fio Rito gives a good performance of *Here's Love in Your Eye* (Decca F6230). As usual, I recommend the latest Len Green *Melodies of the Month, No. 22* (Decca F6232); it is very quiet, but the rhythm is perfect.

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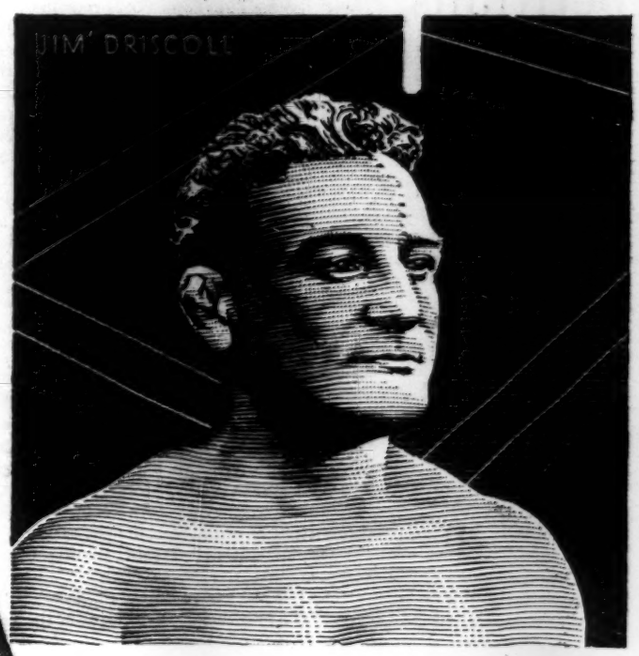

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Week-end Competitions

No. 359

Set by H. E. Waley

We offer the usual prizes for a Rhyming Alphabet for use by the children of Sophisticated Parents.

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1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Friday, February 5th.
2. Competitors may use a pseudonym. Typescript is not insisted on, but writing must be on one side of the paper only.
3. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.
4. No competitor is eligible for more than one prize in any one week.

The result of last week's competition will be announced in our next issue.

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 357

Set by Ivor Brown

We offer the usual prizes for the best Sonnet of the Rural Scene (1937) beginning :

The Total Ox is roasting on the Green
The Coronation Mugs are full of tea.

Report by Ivor Brown

The penalty of setting an easy competition is to be deluged with entries, many of which are almost identical in sentiment and phrase. It was difficult to discover any kind thought for the Vicar, who will, after all, have a tiresome day and earn his mug of tea, not to mention the cut from the so public joint. Horace B. Samuel sent one of the angriest entries, including the lines :

Loud speakers drip the ether's saccharine,
The wistful bathos of the B.B.C.
The cringing clergyman with holy glee
Thanks God that Wallie Simpson is not Queen.

Many, too, saw the shadow of war close the country carnival and visualised the rural procession as a gas-mask parade. A. K. Milne finished well with :

Pomp is snuffed out, and with the fading light,
The Flags grow pale, the Decorations wan.
Beneath Streamers and the fat Balloons,
The War Memorial is hidden quite.

But unfortunately his opening was rather commonplace.

Among those who saw the parish pump drip petrol and the rustic lane beset with Road House glory was W. Leslie Nicholls, who wrote with indignation of " swing " music and the Milk-Shake Bar. K. E. T. Wilkinson was quietly amusing about the day's mishaps. Philip Sparrow saw the village deserted, all rustics having gone by motor coach to Piccadilly, until the rusticating city folk arrive, while Henry Broadbent neatly considered the new officialism of the agricultural world. David Holland played with irony on the word " folk "—his " Definitely Folk " sums up a good deal—while Sore as a Boil visualised the Ox as Argentine, the mugs as Japanese. Out of so many entries which said the same kind of thing with the same kind of force, I have chosen Mrs. Herbert and M. R. Davies for first and second prizes. Mrs. Herbert was almost alone in remembering that an English village on May 12th will still be beautiful whatever man may be up to and her point against the standardised shopping was also sound. M. R. Davies, despite a weak concluding couplet, seemed to me to kick as hard and true as any among the hard-and-true kickers. Mention should be made of J. Taylor, " Sparrow," Giroflee, and Kenneth Muir, as well as of those already cited.

FIRST PRIZE

The Total Ox is roasting on the Green,
The Coronation Mugs are full of tea.
Freed for the day, with Wife and gaping wean,
Hodge toasts each patriotic god there be.
The Townsman's dream of snowy smock, the crook,
The shaggy Horse you rode when fields were young,
Belonged to other Kings. Where'er you look
The reach-me-down a week ago that hung
In dingy urban window is " the Thing."
Do as your neighbour tries to if you can :
A brand-new coat to suit a brand-new King.
A fine tin car to show a " rising " man.
Heart of the Country ! Have we turned you cold ?
Never, while may is white and cowslip gold.

ALICE HERBERT

SECOND PRIZE

The Total Ox is roasting on the Green
The Coronation Mugs are full of tea
(The Noble Beast was fed on *Bovo-Bean*
And Bovo's have arranged the Pageantry).
The Makers of the newest Laxative
Sent us these Royal Muglets, postage free ;
They've also sent a Representative
To take a photo of our Revelry.
Dance, dance ! For here is Syncopation, sent
On air by Makers of Your Favourite Soap :
And here's a choir of Lads and Lasses, lent
By Sobberdog's (Non-Habit-Forming Dope)—
Who, dight as cowherds, dancing in a ring,
Sing " Rule Britannia " and " God Save the King."

M. R. DAVIES

CALIBAN'S PROBLEM CONTEST

PROBLEM 213.—HIGH TEA

" Whatever have you kids been doing ? " I asked my nieces, Daisy and Dulcie. They had been having high tea in the nursery. And the table was littered with papers, covered with figures.

" We've been analysing some numbers," said Daisy. " The series—I'm giving you every fifth term—55, 385, 1240, 2870, 5525. You'll recognise it at once, of course."

" Oh, of course," I said, hoping that illumination would presently emerge.

" And what we've found is this," said Dulcie. " We've analysed each of the first twenty-five terms of the series into its prime factors——"

" Why ? " I asked.

" Oh, just for something to do. And we find—what is interesting—that each term after the sixth has three factors at least."

" Heavens ! " I said. " How old did you kids say you were ? "

" We didn't," said Daisy. " But you can work our ages out, Mr. Caliban. Out of the first twenty-five terms of that series that we've given you, the number that have my age as a factor (my age in years I mean) plus the number that have Dulcie's age as a factor, is equal to my age (in years)."

" By factor," added Dulcie, " she means a prime factor. Don't lose sight of that."

What are the girls' respective ages ?

PROBLEM 212.—RUGGER IN RURITANIA

Some solvers seem to have misunderstood one point in the statement of this problem. The condition " there was no score for a dropped goal in any match in which they (the Ruperts) took part " was meant to be read as explanatory to the condition " there were three odd things about *their* scores." In other words, it is not a condition of the problem that no goal was dropped *against* the Ruperts. I do not think my wording is good (though a number of solvers have sent my intended solution) and claims of no solution already sent will be admitted.

PROBLEM 211.—HAND GRENADES

A straightforward enough problem, but involving a certain amount of calculation.

(1) *Bung-Ho should win the war.*
(2) *The chance that all contestants survive is* 576/390,625.
(3) *The chance that all are killed is* 37,451/390,625.
(4) *Individual chances of survival are :*

Dum-Dum	.. ..	2,074/15,625
Hoo-Ha	.. ..	8,184/15,625
Fling-Hi	.. ..	4,796/15,625
Pip-Pip	.. ..	5,916/15,625

Comments : " A very unkind problem, in that so-called mathematicians are notoriously bad at arithmetic and can't afford hired calculators."—[E. D.]

" Glad that they were allowed only two grenades each, and did not have to fight it out to a finish."—[W. J. H.]

PROBLEM 210.—TODGER'S RACE

A set of Low's Cartoons goes to : E. Darke, Crofton, Penmaenmawr, North Wales. *Six* points are awarded.

PRIZES FOR PROBLEM SOLVERS

A set of Low's cartoons is awarded to the sender of a correct solution selected at random.

In addition, a record is kept of correct solutions sent, and of the points scored weekly by solvers. On attaining 100 points a solver is entitled to a prize consisting of any book (or books) reviewed or advertised in these columns, of a value not greater than 10s. Solvers who have won a prize on this basis are eligible for a second prize on attaining a further 120 points, and for a third prize on attaining a further 150. Solutions must be addressed to CALIBAN, c/o the Editor, and must reach this office not later than Tuesday week following publication of the problem. Solutions to two problems may be sent in one envelope, but on separate sheets of paper.

Some indication should be given of the method of solution.

[U.S.A. Competitors. The Editor regrets that the prizes offered in our Week-end Competitions cannot apply to American competitors.]

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An Examination for the award of Boarders' Entrance Scholarship (value £30 a year) and Bursaries, will be held on March 18th and 19th, 1937, for September entrance. Candidates must be under 14 on June 1st, 1937. For particulars apply to the HEADMISTRESS, The High School, Beauchamp Hall, Leamington.

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ALDWYCH. Jane Eyre. Wed., Thurs. & Sat.
CAMBRIDGE. Charles the King. Tu., Th., S.
COLISEUM. Cinderella. Daily, 2.
COMEDY. Busman's Honeymoon. Tu., F.
DRURY LANE. Careless Rapture. Wed., Sat.
DUCHESS. Murder in the Cathedral. W., Th., S.
DUKE OF YORK'S. The Astonished Ostrich. Wed. & Sat.
HIPPODROME. Mother Goose. W., Th., S., 2.
PALACE. This'll Make You Whistle. W., S.
PLAYHOUSE. Whiteoaks. Wed., Th., Sat.
ST. MARTIN'S. Till the Cows Come Home. Tues. & Fri.
SAVILLE. Over She Goes. Sats.
SHAFTESBURY. "Heart's Content." W., S.
WESTMINSTER. Uncle Vanya. Wed., Sat.
WHITEHALL. Anthony & Anna. W. & S.

THEATRES

ALDWYCH. Tem. Bar 6404.
8.30 (Ex. Mons.) Mats., Wed., Thurs. & Sat., 2.30.
JANE EYRE.
CURIGWEN LEWIS. REGINALD TATE.

CAMBRIDGE. Temple Bar 6056.
EVGS., 8.30. Mats., TUES., THURS., SATS., 2.30.
BARRY JONES. GWEN FFRANGCON-DAVIES
in CHARLES THE KING.

COLISEUM, Charing X. Tem. 3161.
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CINDERELLA
EDNA BEST. LUPINO LANE.
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TILL THE COWS COME HOME.

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Evenings, 8. Sat., 5 & 8.15.
Anthony and Anna. By St. John Ervine.

HULL Little.
Evgs., 8. Mat., Sat., 5.
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LIVERPOOL Playhouse.
Evgs., 7.45. Mat., Sat., 2.30.
The Shining Hour. By Keith Winter.

MANCHESTER Repertory.
Eves., 7.30.
Lights Out at Eleven. By Armitage Owen.

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RUSSIAN REUNION DINNER and FILM SHOW,
arranged by the W.T.A. in conjunction with Intourist, on THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25th, at BUSH HOUSE, ALDWYCH, W.C.2.
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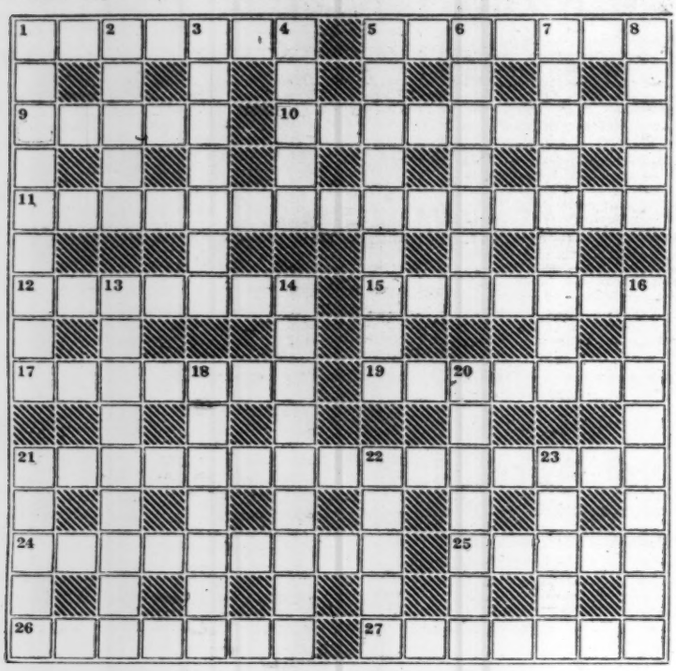
SPANISH YOUTH FOODSHIP COMMITTEE—Dance-Cabaret, Friday, February 5th, Suffolk Galleries, Haymarket, 8 p.m.–1 a.m. Tickets 2s., from SECRETARY, 4 Handel St., W.C.1.

SOCIAL and Dance. Central London Left Book Club. Friday, Jan. 29th, Express Hall, 18 Charing Cross Road. 8 till 12. Licensed bar. Tickets, Double 3s. 6d., Single 2s., from COLLET'S, 66 Charing Cross Road, W.C.2.

WOMEN'S Committee against War and Fascism. CARNIVAL DANCE, Suffolk Galleries, Pall Mall, Saturday, January 30th, 8 till 1 p.m. Tickets 2s. 6d. at door. Funds Urgently Needed to continue Relief Work for Women and Children of Spain.

WEEK-END CROSSWORD 360

The sender of the first correct solution to be opened may choose as prize a copy of either *This England* or *The Playtime Omnibus*. Envelopes should be addressed to "CROSSWORDS," 10 Great Turnstile, High Holborn, W.C.1, and must arrive not later than first post next Wednesday. Prize-winners should address their claims to the Editor.



Set by L.-S.

The last week's winner is
John Wyndham, Grand Opera House, Harrogate, Yorks.

ACROSS

1. How budding *débutantes* emerge of course.
5. Our superiors seem oddly taking people.
9. Put a quid into the unit until it is reformed.
10. Botanical colour vibration.
11. One of Larwood's regulations.
12. Such natives make a difficult opening for a shell out.
15. Her mate could never complain that she wore the trousers.
17. Boring necessity for some egg layers.
19. This school might obviously be a dear one.
21. Concoction by Wilfred Shadbolt and Jack Point.
24. Puzzling answer that would not turn away wrath.
25. Mother held on to a broken oar.
26. Worker who sets out to define skill it seems.
27. Coloured dog chain?

DOWN

1. Possible cricketing result of the upshot.
2. No doubt its work is a bit of a grind.
3. The horse makes it slower than the homeward run.
4. Weary state of the car.
5. What plants in a cold frame would like.
6. The undertaker would con it.
7. An animated suite.
8. The first woman canonised.
13. The reverse of blown in?
14. How to retire when the enclosu collapses.
16. Its purpose is make people hop
18. A sabre is possible substitu for this.
20. Four-fifths of th would make yardstick.
21. An article sup porting two com panies.
22. Australian would not like b be called the in habitants of thi world.
23. Would have good 25 whatev you called it.

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

P	U	M	P	S	■	P	O	L	I	C	E	C	A	R
E	■	E	■	E	R	■	E	■	O	■	A	■	O	■
N	O	T	A	T	H	O	M	E	■	N	O	R	N	S
N	■	A	■	T	■	N	■	S	■	F	■	D	■	I
Y	U	L	E	L	O	G	■	H	A	I	R	P	I	N
P	■	■	■	E	■	S	■	O	■	R	■	A	■	■
O	T	H	E	R	S	■	C	R	O	M	A	R	T	Y
S	■	A	■	■	■	N	■	E	■	■	■	T	■	E
T	U	R	N	T	A	I	L	■	R	E	D	Y	E	S
■	■	D	■	E	■	N	■	P	■	N	■	■	■	T
S	A	L	V	A	G	E	■	O	U	T	L	I	N	E
O	■	I	■	G	■	P	■	P	■	R	■	N	■	R
B	A	N	J	O	■	I	N	G	R	A	I	N	E	D
E	■	E	■	W	■	N	■	U	■	I	■	E	■	A
R	I	S	I	N	G	S	U	N	■	N	E	R	V	Y

GOLDEN MOMENTS

England v. Wales

He's got to be good to get into his country's team —but what a Golden Moment it must be for him when he scores between the posts to give his side the victory.

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Company Meeting

F. W. WOOLWORTH & CO., LTD.

Mr. W. L. STEPHENSON'S ADDRESS

THE Twenty-eighth Annual General Meeting of F. W. Woolworth and Co., Limited, was held on Friday, January 22nd, in London.

Mr. W. L. Stephenson (chairman) presided, and after explaining the recent Bonus issue, said (in part) :—Your business made a profit, before taxation, amounting to £5,832,442 6*s*. 2*d*., a new record, and £534,038 0*s*. 7*d*. in excess of the previous year. Whilst some small part of the increased profit is due to income from investments, etc., the bulk is, of course, due directly to bigger sales. The percentage rise in volume of business was considerably more than the percentage rise in profit on the merchandise sold. There are two reasons for this—first, a moderate reduction in ratio of profit due to higher costs of goods, and, second, a considerable increase in operation expense. As you can imagine, the sales had to be good, and very good, to offset these conditions and produce the record profits to which I have referred.

New business contributed substantially to these profits. I believe I stated last January that we expected to enlarge 66 of our old stores during the year 1936. Actually only 53 such improvements were effectively brought into being during the year, but with the 40 new stores also erected and brought into operation the programme was a strenuous one for the staff. From the figures in your possession, as compared with the previous accounts, you will find that during the year (before current depreciation) the sum of £1,698,440 16*s*. 9*d*. was invested in additional properties, buildings, stock, and fixtures. This entails the permanent employment of some thousands of additional staff. The number of stores in operation as at December 31st, 1936, was 677, and no expense has been spared in keeping every unit in excellent condition.

The stock of merchandise on hand was high, standing at £3,151,913 15*s*. 4*d*. The management deliberately planned to pass into this year with more than the usual stock of staple merchandise in view of the tendency to higher prices, which is increasingly noticeable.

The item in the profit and loss account of £21,891 16*s*. 10*d*. represents the total cost of the share bonus issue, and is quite properly written off in the current year. The cash on hand at £6,710,349 5*s*. 5*d*. is £102,377 7*s*. 11d. more than that shown in the 1935 statement, notwithstanding the heavy additional investment already referred to. Liberal cash resources continue to be of prime importance in the manipulation of affairs in your company.

COMMODITY PRICES AND TRADE POLICY

The prices of materials and manufactured articles are rising, but this in itself is surely evidence of the increased demand which indicates more prosperity. Within reasonable limits this tendency of increasing prices can be handled by your company. If, on the other hand, and I do not by any means anticipate this, the prices of manufactured goods should become so enhanced as to affect seriously our range of merchandise, we shall and can resort to raising our selling price limit. We should be most reluctant to operate with a higher limit than that existing, but the machinery of the business is sufficiently elastic to provide for any action that might become necessary due to economic conditions.

The chairman then paid a tribute to the whole staff of the company for the excellence of their service and continuing, he said :—Turning to the directors' recommendations as contained in the report, we find that after removing the sum of £3,750,000 from the amount of £6,541,663 1*s*. 7*d*. brought forward from the 1935 accounts, we have £2,791,663 1*s*. 7*d*., which, added to the net profit for 1936, gives us a total of £8,624,105 7*s*. 9*d*. From this the directors have made appropriation for taxation of £1,256,127 13*s*. 11*d*. and have paid during the year dividend on 5,000,000 Six per Cent. Cumulative Preference shares amounting, less tax, to £228,750, and an interim dividend on 15,000,000 Ordinary shares of 1*s*. 6*d*. per share, less tax, amounting to £857,812 10*s*. After deducting these amounts we have an available balance of £6,281,415 3*s*. 10*d*.

Freehold building reserve at £100,000 is as before and brings this fund to £350,000. I should explain once more that this is a reserve for buildings on the company's freehold sites only. Leasehold buildings and properties are written down annually by means of amortisation.

The staff benevolent fund has been in existence for many years and already stands at a good figure. The board wish to augment this fund with a view to certain improved benefits, and I am sure this item will meet with your approval.

By way of final dividend it is proposed to pay on February 1st 1*s*. 9*d*. per share, less tax, on the 30,000,000 Ordinary 5*s*. shares, plus a cash bonus of 6*d*. per share, less tax. This will bring the total payment for the year on the basis of the new capital structure of 30,000,000 Ordinary shares to an equivalent of 3*s*. per share, less tax. These recommendations, if accepted, will absorb £2,773,437 10*s*., leaving a balance to be carried forward of £3,507,977 13*s*. 10*d*.

It will be seen that after providing for all these requirements out of the net profit for 1936 an amount of £716,314 12*s*. 3*d*. will be added to the surplus amount to carry forward.

The adoption of the Report and dividend resolution were carried unanimously.

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THE WEEK IN THE CITY

By TOREADOR

THE GILT-EDGED BOTTOM—U.K. AND ARGENTINE TRUST B—WALL STREET, THE STRIKE AND THE NEXT SLUMP—AMERICAN INVESTMENT TRUSTS—GAUMONT-BRITISH

COLD feet are still trampling upon the gilt-edged market, but I remain of the opinion that they are not the feet of the joint stock bankers or of the insurance company directors. In so far as the selling comes from company executives who want to replenish their cash resources it is genuine enough, but some of the selling is panicky and some of it the sport of "bears." On the whole, having regard to all the unreasonable alarms and silly rumours current, the decline has not been so dreadful as it might have been. At this point it may be interesting to compare the yields returnable on Tuesday's prices with those returnable at the end of July, 1936, a stable period in the market:

	Price end July.	Flat Yield	Adjusted Gross Redempt.* Yield	Price Jan. 26, 1937.	Flat Yield	Adjusted Gross Redempt.* Yield
Consols 2½%	85	£2 19 0	—	82⅞	£3 0 6	—
Local Loans 3%	96⅝	3 2 3	—	94¼	3 3 9	—
Conversion 3½%	107½	3 5 6	3 0 0	105½	3 7 0	3 3 3
War Loan 3½%	106⅛	3 5 9	2 18 0	104⅛	3 7 3	3 2 0
Funding 4%	117¾	3 8 3	2 16 0	114⅛	3 10 3	2 19 9
Victory Bonds 4%	116⅜	3 9 6	2 18 0†	113⅞	3 11 3	3 2 0†
Consols 4%	114¼xd	3 9 9	2 16 6	111⅞xd	3 11 6	3 0 3
Conversion 3% 1948–53	103⅜xd	2 18 0	2 16 6	100½xd	2 19 6	2 17 9
Funding 3% 1959–69	103¼	2 18 6	2 16 0	99½	3 0 9	3 1 3

* Gross equivalent of net redemption yield with tax at 4s. 9d.
† Average term, say, 24 years.

Nothing has happened so far to suggest that the gilt-edged market is moving down to return, say, much more than ¼ per cent. more than it did six months ago. The "bears" who expect the bottom to drop out of the market will be disappointed.

* * *

I did suggest to the professional investor on December 19th that if an exchange into a gilt-edged "funk-hole" were desired nothing better could be obtained than the Railway Freight Rebates Fund 2½ per cent. 1937–52 stock on account of its huge cumulative sinking fund of 5.12 per cent. operating by purchases below or by drawings at par. This stock, issued at 94½, now stands at 97 to yield £2 11s. 6d. per cent. flat or £2 15s. to redemption. The private investor might consider U.K. and Argentine Convention Trust B 5½ per cent. certificates at 116 to yield £4.78 per cent. flat or £3.98 per cent. to redemption in say 12½ years. These certificates are now backed as to 71.4 per cent. by Conversion 3 per cent. and as to the balance by Argentine Government 4 per cent. bonds (now quoted at 98) ten times over. By November, 1941, after two annual operations of the sinking fund, they will be wholly backed by Conversion 3 per cent. As for the interest, it is now met as to 0.7 per cent. by the income from Conversion 3 per cent. and as to the balance it is covered over twice by the income from the Argentine Government 4 per cent. bonds. By 1946, when the A certificates are repaid, the income from Conversion 3 per cent. will cover all the 5½ per cent. interest of the B certificates. As Argentine Government bonds are now considered a much better risk than they were when the U.K. and Argentine Convention Trust was created, the private investor may be tempted by these B certificates giving nearly 1 per cent. more yield than that obtainable on pure British Government stocks.

* * *

The less short-sighted investors in Wall Street have welcomed the strike in the General Motors plants. They had been disturbed by the too rapid rise in commodity prices and by the recent pace of the industrial recovery. The strike, in their opinion, has been a healthy corrective force. It has brought down prices and it is enabling the capital goods industries to catch up with this accumulated arrears of orders, the piling up of which had been making for a dangerous boom. The steel industry is thus happily maintaining or even increasing its rate of activity during the period of the strike. Further, Mr. John Lewis is proving a blessing even to the automobile industry. The stocks of used cars had increased to a dangerous level, and if General Motors and the rest had been allowed to proceed with their programme of new cars the prices of used cars would have collapsed utterly and the marketing of new cars would have been affected. Of course, everyone hopes that Mr. John Lewis will confine his attention only to General Motors. A strike in the bituminous coal industry or on the railroads would hold up the recovery of the whole nation. For the moment, however, the American stock markets are refusing to be greatly depressed by Mr. Lewis. This far-sightedness on the part of the American investor is becoming quite impressive. Why, even Mr. Keynes' advice on how to avoid the next slump has begun to exercise the Wall Street stockbroker. Perhaps I may be allowed to quote the following passage from a leading stockbroker's letter: "It is true that the President speaks of a reduction in relief expenditures during the fiscal year beginning July 1st next, but such a reduction is not to be the result of a determined policy to curtail relief expenditures; on the contrary, it is based purely on the hope that business will re-employ more men and thus reduce the Government's cost of supporting the idle. The unfortunate aspect is that nobody seems to be thinking of the future. If we are to maintain a high plateau of expenditures during the years of recovery, what is going to be our situation when we go into the next business slump? There seems to be no thought of establishing a reserve for this contingency through a progressive lowering of the public debt during good years. . . . Anyone who is familiar with the make-up of the American Congress must be convinced that if we have several years of rising revenue, practically all of it will be used to increase appropriations beyond existing levels in order to satisfy this or that group's thirst for public expenditures. . . . I am not talking now of another depression of the type witnessed from 1929 to 1935, but an ordinary business slump that comes every so often."

The conclusion drawn by this stockbroker was that the "bond market had never looked so unfavourable." The more practical conclusion to be drawn by the British investor is that the common stocks of the big mail order or department stores never looked more attractive. If spending is to continue in the Roosevelt manner the sales of Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck will go on increasing. These companies are not liable to labour troubles and can pass on increased costs to the consumer much more easily than Woolworth.

* * *

My Statistical Assistant, having received a remarkable tip "from a well-informed source" in America writes this interesting letter:

The common stocks of American Investment Trusts are more popular in England than in America, being regarded here as the safest means of profiting from recovery in the United States. The American usually fancies his skill in picking winners on

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Wall Street, but the Englishman investing in a foreign country usually prefers to leave the choice of the winning stocks to the investment trust managers. There are, however, certain disadvantages attaching to American Investment Trust common stocks, the principal being: (1) the double taxation of capital profits; (2) the fact that the stockholders themselves in the past often got no cash benefit from successful investment by the Trust; and (3) the very poor market in the stocks themselves. This explains why the common stocks of Investment Trusts in America sell in the market at prices considerably below the break-up value. If, however, the rumours I hear are correct, these disadvantages may be removed. First of all the 1936 Revenue Act imposed penal taxation on undistributed profits, so that there is a very strong tendency for companies to distribute their earnings up to the hilt. These extra dividends mean more income for investors and more tax for the American Treasury. The extra dividends also mean more income for the Investment Trusts, and since the undistributed profits tax applies also to them, the Investment Trusts will tend to pay out in dividends not only their total net dividend income but also their realised profits on sales of securities. Thus objection No. 2 is removed. Secondly, it is obviously inequitable that capital profits already taxed in the hands of the Trust should be taxed again as dividends in the hands of the stockholder, quite apart from the capital gains tax paid by an American should he sell his holding of the Trust company stock at a profit. The fact that such a provision works unfairly does not mean, least of all in America, that it will be put right, but the Treasury has good reason to be satisfied with the amount of tax collected as a result of forcing dividend distributions. The rumour is that the "mutualisation" of the American Investment Trusts may be carried one step further by the Companies themselves agreeing to buy back their own stock at a price based on the break-up value in consideration of tax concessions. If the Treasury gives up the right to exact tax on the Trusts capital profits, provided that they distribute all their profits in dividends and provided that they mutualise themselves by forming a guaranteed market in their own shares on the lines of the British Unit trusts, everything will be lovely for the stockholders, and the market prices of the common stocks would more nearly approximate to the break-up value. The snag from the English stockholders' point of view is that the foreigners' dividend tax may be increased from the present 10 per cent. and that British tax will be chargeable not only on that part of the dividend from the Trust which represents income, but also on the part which represents capital. The following are the prices and the break-up values of some American Investment Trust Common Stocks:

	Dividends paid in 1936.	Break-up Value 31.12.1936.	Present price.
General American Investors..	$0.75	17.4	14⅜
Lehman	$6.50	137.2	127
Tri-Continental	$0.50	13 estimated	10⅞
U.S. and Foreign Securities..	Nil	25 estimated	19½

I do not attach much importance to the dividend yields, although in some cases they may be fantastically high in 1937, since the dividends are dependent on realised capital profits, which must fluctuate. Despite the absence of dividend—and no early dividend is expected in view of arrears of dividend on the Second Preferred shares—U.S. and Foreign Common shares look cheap. Lehman Corporation is, of course, the least speculative and perhaps the best managed. A point to remember is that the Dow Jones indices have all risen since 31st December, 1936, and the break-up values must all be considerably higher.

* * *

So the Gaumont-British may retire from film production. Mr. Isidore Ostrer declared on his return from America that if the Company did not receive a larger income from the United States it could not make production pay and would have to rely on its theatre business. Presumably this would suit the film-producing Associated British Picture Corporation, which is now, or hopes to be eventually, controlling Gaumont-British, but I hope the shareholders of Gaumont-British realise that a final retirement from film production probably necessitates a heavy writing-down of capital. Of course, Mr. Ostrer may only be talking politics. But how can the British Government force the American to import more British films when there is no guarantee or standard of quality? Will the British Government pay for the losses on the exhibition of British films in America? The proposition is absurd. Gaumont-British would never have come to this pass if it had secured, as was originally intended, co-operation with the big American producers

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Economist, Jan. 16th, 1937

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Company Meeting

MIDLAND BANK LIMITED

Mr. McKENNA'S ADDRESS

The ordinary general meeting of shareholders of the Midland Bank Limited was held on Tuesday, January 26th, in London.

The Right Hon. R. McKenna, Chairman, presided, and said (in part): While the progress of international trade is encouraging, it is still true that our recovery has occurred almost entirely in the domestic field—a fact which has given rise to some apprehension for the future. It is generally recognised that the trade improvement is largely due to the policy of cheap and abundant money steadily pursued since 1932, but it is alleged that recovery on this basis cannot be regarded as on a firm foundation. In the first place it is argued that trade expansion must itself lead eventually to dearer money; and secondly that cheap money engenders evils which can be corrected only by making money dearer. The first of these gloomy forecasts can be readily disposed of. In spite of the very large growth of production and employment in this country, credit is still as plentiful, at rates just as low as at the beginning of the process. The banks have a wide margin of resources available for advances should greater demands be made upon them. The second cause of apprehension is much more serious, and calls for inquiry whether the evils to which cheap money is said to give birth are now present or imminent, and, if so, what means are available to cope with them.

Supposed Impending Dangers

The reasons put forward for thinking that the existing conditions have little remaining stability can be summarised under the heads of labour shortage, excessive speculation and a possible adverse balance of international payments. Of these potential evils shortage of labour is undoubtedly the most immediate. So far as skilled labour is lacking, there must be a tendency for the price of labour to be bid higher and for the average level of efficiency to decline. For the present this upward tendency of costs is probably still offset by the spreading of fixed charges over a larger turnover, but the reality of the trend towards higher unit costs in a number of industries can scarcely be doubted. This particular threat is, then, relatively near at hand, but for the time being is a threat only to further advance, and need not lead us to anticipate any setback.

More than once in the last few months foreign and domestic events have occurred which would have had a disastrous effect on a really speculative market had there been one. I do not say that a speculative mania could not develop in this country; we have had it in the past and we might have it again; but I do say there is no sign that one is developing, nor do I think one to be probable.

Disturbance of the Balance of Payments

Let me turn now to the third alleged reason for thinking that the present conditions are not stable—the fear that the balance of international payments is turning against us. On this head I think we are sometimes inclined to be unduly anxious.

In the long run the surest indication of the trend of the balance of international payments is a decided tendency of the exchange value of the pound to move up or down. If the balance of payments were running against us the exchange value of the pound would tend to decline, and, in the absence of offsetting capital movements, exchange equilibrium could be maintained only by official purchases of sterling. The fact that the trend of operations over a number of years appears to have been the other way indicates that no lasting weakness has thus far developed in our balance of international payments.

If the conditions in respect of labour, speculation and international payments are as I have endeavoured to outline, it seems unlikely that we have yet reached a stage at which the upward trend of industry and trade will be halted. We must not blink the fact, however, that cheap and abundant money, so beneficial to trade and industry, provides a fertile field for the growth of the adverse influences to which I have referred, and we may yet find ourselves face to face with forces which if left uncontrolled would result in an upward spiral of costs and prices. The comparative ease with which large profits had been made would then be replaced by the difficulty of avoiding heavy losses, and the rush to get out of commitments would be far more precipitate than the former eagerness to enter into them. If, as is probable in such conditions, the reverse movement gathered strength, the effects on trade and industry would be both sudden and violent. It is, then, no more than common prudence to review the position from time to time, and if we see possible dangers ahead to consider the best way to prevent them.

When we were on the gold standard the recognised check to boom conditions, whatever their cause, was a rise in the Bank rate and a contraction of credit. Boom conditions weakened the exchange value of sterling, and the statutory duty to maintain gold parity forced the Bank of England to adopt restrictive measures. The remedy certainly achieved its object, but at the same time it seldom failed to do much more than the occasion required. It fell with like effect on all trade and industry and on all markets, whether speculative or not, and by forcing down prices far more quickly than costs tended to produce a condition of business stagnation. Such procedure was unavoidable when we were living under the obligations of the gold standard, but is it necessarily the right procedure now that we are free from them?

Available Means of Protection

Consider first the risk of excessive speculation. I do not wish to be dogmatic on the subject, but it seems to me that the remedy lies with the banks. They have the power, acting together on an agreed basis, to place a curb upon speculation by directly restricting the quantity of credit used for that purpose. Genuine business would not be affected; there would still be cheap money and abundance of credit for legitimate trade, but there would be no easy money for the mere speculator. I repeat, there are no sufficient indications at present of dangerous speculation, but should this appear a powerful remedy could be provided by the concerted and direct action of the banks without recourse to high rates and indiscriminate restriction of credit. The country ought not to be required to submit to general stagnation as a cure for the activity of speculators.

I turn next to labour shortage, a problem which is admittedly not easy to solve. The essence of the danger lies in over-expansion of capacity for the production of capital goods, but, as this arises from the independent action of many firms scattered over the country, the individual *entrepreneur* does not always recognise it. His action appears to himself to be no more than a capital expenditure promising an early and substantial return. Great caution is needed in introducing new capital into industry when a shortage of labour becomes widespread. Banks make only temporary advances for the purpose of capital outlay, so that restriction of banking credit would be no safeguard. A partial remedy appears to lie in the close scrutiny to which new issues have for some time been subjected, but no external measures can be fully effective unless industrialists and traders themselves take a long and cautious view, based upon the far wider information available now than ever before.

When we come to the balance of international payments, on the other hand, restriction of credit appears to be the only available means for correcting an adverse condition. A lasting shortage of receipts from abroad, arising from exports, services and interest, would indicate that our price level was too high in relation to world prices and our current consumption greater than it should be; and in the circumstances of our own economic life I should regard a persistent deficit on the balance of payments as the true warning of boom conditions. Happily, however, that evil does not appear to be at hand.

Elements of Elasticity

There remain to be mentioned three important elements of elasticity in our monetary system. First among these I would place the Exchange Equalisation Account, which has maintained reasonably steady exchange rates while leaving us free internally from the chance effects of the operation of a rigid gold standard.

The operation of the Account imposes a heavy responsibility upon the authorities, whose constant watchfulness is essential in correctly interpreting the movements in the exchange market. I think they are to be congratulated on their handling of this new instrument.

A further element of elasticity is provided by the statutory facilities for varying the fiduciary note issue. We had recently a striking example of the utility of these provisions, when the Issue Department of the Bank of England received £65 millions in gold from the Exchange Equalisation Account and handed over £60 millions of its Government securities in partial payment. By this transaction the fiduciary issue of notes was reduced by £60 millions; but the reduction of the fiduciary issue was not its purpose. To use the current phrase, the authorities were desirous of sterilising an excessive influx of gold. They were faced with the same problem which has recently confronted the monetary authorities in other countries, notably the United States—the problem of preventing an undue increase of credit in consequence of large official

(*Continued on page 185*)

MIDLAND BANK LIMITED

(*Continued from page 184*)

purchases of gold. The simplicity and neatness of the transaction illustrate the immense advantage of skilled management under the new flexibility permitted by the law.

Elasticity of another but no less valuable kind is to be found in the liquidity of the commercial banks. All the banks whose figures I have seen earned larger profits last year, and there can be no doubt that a contributory factor has been the decline in bad debts. With a continuance of the same wise handling of our monetary system that we have had in the past five years we need not fear a return of the stringency to which our business life was formerly subjected.

For all these reasons we may, I think, take a confident view of the future. I have given grounds for concluding that the dangers inherent in an advanced stage of recovery induced by cheap money are not immediately at hand. I have, moreover, ventured the opinion that we are in a far stronger position to combat them with appropriate measures if they should become real and immediate. There is need for unremitting watchfulness and prudence on the part of industry itself as well as the banks and financial institutions generally; but with clearer perception of the dangers, fuller understanding of their nature, and better weapons to cope with them, I feel sure they can be overcome without recourse to those rough and ready measures which in curing particular evils inevitably brought about a general trade recession.

The upward trend of profits in the past few years was maintained in 1936, though the figure is still well below those recorded when higher average rates were earned on our assets. The increase of about £115,000 on the year, notwithstanding the absence of any rise in money rates, is attributable partly to the rather greater demand for advances and for short loans, particularly those yielding higher rates of interest. Moreover the increase in total deposits has been largely on current accounts, while it has been possible with a more abundant supply of bills to reduce the proportion of unproductive cash to a figure close to what had come to be regarded as normal. The expansion in the services rendered to customers in return for higher earnings is reflected in an addition of roughly 6½ per cent. to the turnover on current accounts.

Adding together the profit for the year, approximately £2,468,000, and the balance brought forward from the previous year's account a total of £2,935,000 is available. The board have utilised the increased profits to strengthen further the position of the bank, and to that end have raised by £50,000 each, as compared with a year ago, the appropriations to reduction of bank premises and to reserve for future contingencies. These absorb £350,000 and £300,000 respectively. An interim dividend at the rate of 16 per cent. per annum less income tax was paid in July, and the directors now propose a final dividend at the same rate. By reason of the increase of threepence in the standard rate of income tax, the amount of which is provided before striking our net profit, the sum required for dividends is slightly lower at £1,738,000. These various allocations leave a balance of £547,000 to go forward into the next account as against £467,000 last time. I trust you will approve the policy of utilising increased profits to reinforce the internal finances of the bank, bearing in mind the losses incurred in years of depression.

RISE IN ADVANCES

Perhaps the most encouraging movement revealed by the balance sheet is the further rise in advances, which are £12½ millions higher on the year. This is a welcome development, common to all the banks, but we should be on our guard against the frequent assumption that it is entirely due to the increased requirements of more active industry and trade. To judge from our latest regular analysis of the advances on our books, little more than one-third of the rise over the year can be accounted for in this way; rather less than one-third is the result of further special loans to local authorities; and the balance consists of advances for private and professional purposes, largely to facilitate the greater volume of investment in real property. Nevertheless, it seems now that business advances proper have passed the low point, reached in 1935, and are definitely if slightly on the up-grade.

The failure of advances to rise along with the great expansion in the nation's business is still a mystery to many people. The explanation, I think, is simple. The results of inquiry justify the statement that industry has been enabled, through the monetary policy pursued by our authorities, to finance itself to a far larger extent than formerly.

I think it may fairly be concluded that the bank and the affiliated companies have all grown in strength and prosperity during the past year. They have shared in the general business recovery, which happily is not yet at an end. It may be that last year's rate of expansion will not be maintained, but we can at least anticipate with confidence that business will be fully as good in 1937 as in 1936. If to these favourable prospects at home could be added the stimulus of general appeasement in international affairs, the possibility of which seems at the moment a little nearer, we could be assured of a still wider extension of prosperity throughout the country.

The report was adopted and other ordinary business transacted.

Company Meeting

NATIONAL PROVINCIAL BANK LIMITED

MR. COLIN CAMPBELL'S ADDRESS

THE annual general meeting of the National Provincial Bank Limited was held in London on Thursday last.

Mr. Colin Campbell, chairman, presided and after referring to the changes in Directorate and Staff during the year, said (in part):

Current, Deposit and Other Accounts, have increased by over £18,000,000 to £320,898,298. This figure is a record in our history.

Coin, Bank Notes and Balances with the Bank of England at over £34,000,000 amount to 10.7 per cent. of our Deposits and Money at Call and Short Notice shows an increase of nearly £4,000,000 and Bills Discounted at £44,000,000 are over £4,000,000 up. Advances have increased from £112,000,000 to £122,000,000. The profit statement discloses a nett profit of £1,770,173 3*s.*, being an increase of £104,735 15*s.* 8*d.* over the previous year. The dividend continues at 15 per cent. as before, and after allocating £100,000 to Bank Premises Account, and £200,000 to Pension Fund against £100,000 a year ago, there remains to be carried forward £970,667 1*s.* 2*d.*, an increase of £48,260 15*s.* compared with the previous year.

Looking at the record of our country as a whole, we have every reason to be satisfied with its work and spirit during the past year. In spite of being subjected to severe shocks and many uncertainties, it has maintained its business progress with a calmness that has won the admiration of the world, and has belied the forecasts of those who have been telling us that the present activity is too feverish and artificial to last and must be succeeded by early reaction. On the contrary, the rate of progress in some departments of business has been accelerated and we can look forward with confidence to a continuance of this activity.

The large increase in our visible imports, as compared with that of exports, during 1936, has naturally caused a certain amount of uneasiness since it is generally assumed that the improvement in the value of our invisible exports cannot be sufficient to counterbalance it. This improvement, however, must certainly be substantial, for the rise in commodity prices must also have brought a good addition to the profits of the many British companies and enterprises working overseas and must also have enabled those debtor countries to meet their debt charges more easily and fully. In addition the higher rates of freight lately earned by our shipping companies will surely be found to have shown a considerable increase in this item in our balance sheet, so that altogether the balance ought not to be far on the wrong side. We can surely hope before long these invisible exports will increase to an extent sufficient to produce a balance on the right side, and that foreign lending to good borrowers will be rendered easier than is the case at present.

The growth in our exports has been hindered by many causes, and not least by the interruptions due to the war in Abyssinia and the tragedy that is being enacted in Spain. The inability of our industries to meet the pressing demands of the home market and at the same time to fulfil an increasing number of orders from overseas is a further case in point. This inability has not been due to too high a level of cost in this country, but to the fact that many of our chief industries are already working at full capacity and cannot find the skilled men required to produce any increase in output. Overseas orders, even on account of the most solvent customers are often complicated these days by questions of credit and are rendered unattractive by the difficulties of exchange restrictions. So that it is very natural for industry, at present fully occupied at home, to pay less attention to the overseas market, but it will be unfortunate if British industry, is tempted by these considerations to neglect opportunities for increasing its connections abroad and even to allow old connections to be lost, perhaps for all time.

The Chairman then dealt with the Special Areas and continuing said:

The prospects for the present year, within the horizon of our home and of the British Empire, are such that we face it with confidence notwithstanding the clouds abroad. Abundant credit has been available on very favourable terms to British industry in all its branches. Some fears have been expressed lest rising commodity prices and expanding trade should cause demands on our credit system which would enforce a reversal of this policy. I see no reason to anticipate embarrassment from any such development. In present conditions the power of our monetary authorities to influence the price of money is almost unlimited, and they are evidently determined to use it on the side of maintaining an adequate supply of credit.

I hope that this year may witness the beginning of an era of more cordial co-operation in international affairs, for which our Government has always worked so hard. On the other side of the Atlantic, America is facing her problems with characteristic courage.

We hope that during the coming year political uncertainties may be less unsettling and that the aggressive tendencies of some of our European neighbours may be modified. It will be the privilege of this country to exercise all the influence it possesses in the world of business to establish international understanding and intercourse, and so take a leading part in the development of the well-being of all nations.

The report was unanimously adopted.

Company Meeting

WESTMINSTER BANK LIMITED

THE HON. RUPERT E. BECKETT'S ADDRESS

The Annual Ordinary General Meeting of Westminster Bank Limited was held on Wednesday last at the Head Office, Lothbury, E.C. The Hon. Rupert E. Beckett (Chairman) presided.

The Chairman opened his address with a reference to the changes in the Directorate that had occurred during 1936. He expressed great regret at having to report the death of two of the Bank's senior Directors, Sir George Murray and Mr. R. Hugh Tennant, both of whom had rendered long and valuable service to the bank. He reported with gratification that the Marquess of Willingdon had been appointed to the Board.

The steady growth in the credit base since 1932, greatly accelerated in 1936, had naturally been reflected in an increase in deposits, which had grown during the past year by over £45 million to nearly £368 million. There had been no proportionate increase in the demand for bank advances, and the problem of profitably employing these increased resources had necessitated an enlargement of investment holdings throughout the period of credit expansion. The additional deposits in 1936 had been mainly distributed, as to £6 million in investments, £10½ million in advances to customers, and £26½ million in money at call and short notice.

The profit for the year was £1,731,955, an increase of £329,300 on the previous year's declaration. After payment of the dividends at the customary rates, the sum of £200,000 had been allocated to the Officers' Pension Fund, and a like amount to Premises Account. The carry-forward was increased to £516,936.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

During the past year the pace of recovery at home had been fully maintained, and in many countries overseas, with whose prosperity our own well-being was so closely bound up, conditions of trade and employment had shown considerable improvement. Unfortunately, the political developments of 1936 had been of a very disturbing nature, and international confidence had suffered a number of serious setbacks. Rearmament had continued apace in every country, and though this had given a direct fillip to industrial activity and employment, it could not have failed to retard the growth of confidence which was vital to the rehabilitation of international trade. The devaluation of the French franc and other currencies might yet prove to be the turning-point in the course of national trade policies. Much more important to the world at large than the change of policy on the part of the French Government was the tripartite agreement among France, the United States and our own country to co-operate in maintaining exchange equilibrium and in efforts to modify trade restrictions, but unfortunately there had been little sign, as yet, of definite action to this end.

There was abundant evidence of rapid progress last year in British industry, which had derived its main stimulus from the internal market. Industrial production had been on an appreciably larger scale than in 1935, the number of unemployed in Great Britain had fallen by some 240,000, and the number of workers in employment had grown steadily to the record figure of 11,132,000. In addition, short time had become much less prevalent, wage rates had risen, and industrial disputes had been comparatively few and without serious consequence. Other statistics indicated without exception a greater degree of prosperity than had been experienced for a number of years. The Chairman, after reviewing the progress made by the principal industries, remarked upon the decline in the ratio between exports and imports. Imports had grown considerably, while exports had remained almost stationary, with the result that the gap between them had widened from £275 million to £348 million, an increase which could be only partially offset by the anticipated larger contribution of our invisible exports to the credit side of our national trading accounts. Mr. Beckett analysed the causes underlying this development, and concluded that, although expanding imports might be a sign of national prosperity, they had to be paid for, and in the long run they could not be afforded unless a correspondingly increased volume of exports could be sold.

THE RISE OF PRICES

By far the most important happening in the economic sphere during the past year had been the sustained rise of commodity prices—the first considerable rise of prices in this country since the low levels associated with the depression. Wholesale prices, as measured by the Board of Trade, were now some 10 per cent. higher than they were a year ago, and 14½ per cent. higher than in July, 1935, when the movement began. This was a development of world-wide extent, for during the past twelve months, wholesale prices in practically every country of importance had risen by something like 7 per cent. The most significant, and at the same time the most hopeful, aspect of the rise of prices was its incidence on agricultural products, which enabled their producers to pay for larger imports of manufactures, and to resume or to increase payments of interest on their bonds held abroad, which had been suspended or seriously reduced. In the majority of cases, the rise of prices had been brough about in the healthiest possible way—by improvement of the balance between supply and demand. Stocks had gradually been reduced to more normal proportions, current output had been brought more into accord with prospective consumption, and the recovery of industry had brought about a gradual revival of genuine consumptive demand for nearly every industrial raw material, and increased consumption of foodstuffs. Under these combined influences prices had begun to move upward, not hitherto in the spectacular manner associated with a boom, but in the steady way that encouraged a further expansion of trade. A rise of prices from the recent abnormally low levels conferred undoubted benefits on the community as a whole, but danger lay in the liability of such a movement to get out of hand. The Chairman saw no convincing evidence that a boom was yet developing. Whilst he was sensible of the dangers of an excessive rise of prices, he thought that those who already advocated steps to check the present rise were prematurely apprehensive. Nevertheless, it was necessary that those in authority should keep a watchful eye on the movement, lest in any particular direction speculation should exceed its legitimate functions.

THE OUTLOOK

The recovery so far seen had been a fairly general experience throughout the world, proving again that, with countries linked by innumerable ties, the prosperity and well-being of the one or the few spread and overflowed with the same inevitability as did depression some years back. But with large and important countries still pledged to exclude international trade as far as possible the rest of the world was denied a full measure of recovery. Ominous clouds still overhung the political sphere, but if only these could be dispersed, this year promised still further trade progress for this and other countries. The first necessity appeared to Mr. Beckett to be the continuance of the policy of cheap money. During the past year, there had been from time to time signs that the supply of credit was not quite so plentiful as in recent years, but nevertheless, we should still be some distance from the necessity for dearer rates. A tightening-up of credit would apply a brake to business enterprise, and exert an adverse psychological effect all round. Industry and commerce still needed every facility open to them to continue their development.

With other nations rearming at a feverish pace, we had, after long delay and with great reluctance, been forced to strengthen our own defences, and accept an armaments bill as an inevitable and distasteful necessity. Not by any means the least important factor in our progress had been the background of a sound budget. We had faced the difficulties of the situation in 1931, shouldered heavy burdens, and had come successfully through to a balanced budget. Since then we had not looked back. Our country was still one of the very few which managed to balance income and expenditure, and this situation was of such fundamental importance, both for our own self-esteem and as a visible sign to the outside world of our determination to be rooted in stability, that we must again be prepared for sacrifice. So far as it was possible, therefore, the bill for armaments should be met out of current revenue. We must be prepared to face heavier taxation, with this consolation—that the country was in a far better position now to bear an added burden that it had been for a number of years past.

He had already remarked on the paramount necessity of developing our export trade by all the means at our disposal. Only by a radical improvement in that sphere could we hope to make further reductions in unemployment—a task which became more and more difficult as time went on—and to bring abiding help to those areas whose dire needs had so far presented an almost insoluble problem.

Any attempt to forecast the future trend of affairs, save in the most general terms, would be futile—this because the political outlook was unusually obscure, and the future was more than ever governed by events abroad, where we could do no more than exercise the influence we possess in the direction of peace and sanity. There had been little amelioration of tariffs, quotas and other restrictions, and though the various exchange equalisation funds had performed their functions of preventing violent fluctuations in exchanges, we had not been brought much nearer to a common denominator in the shape of definite parities between this country, France and America. The necessity for equalisation funds was proof that the genuine functions of the various exchanges were to a great extent still in abeyance. By this he meant that these funds had taken the position that should be filled by the passage of goods themselves. They helped to maintain the international value of a nation's currency when neither by the amount of goods exported, nor in some instances by its own domestic price-level, could such value be justified. It was in fact the fictitious position of turning credit into a commodity, the true commodity, goods being lacking. Nevertheless, exchange equalisation funds could do a great deal to counteract the ill-effects of any sudden flight from a particular currency, and had, indeed, already proved their utility in neutralising the effects of large capital movements.

The measure of stability already attained amongst the chief currencies of the world was the result of economic co-operation. Was it too much to hope that political considerations would not be allowed to stand in the way of a wider collaboration, through which alone the universal desire for lasting peace and prosperity could be achieved?

The Report and Accounts were unanimously adopted and other formal business transacted.

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